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NANCY GOES TO TOWN

BY

FRANCES R. STERRETT

AUTHOR OF "REBECCA'S PROMISE," "JIMMIE THE SIXTH,"
"MARY ROSE OF MIFFLIN," ETC.

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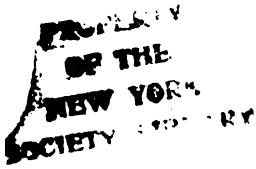

JANET WOODS STERRETT

IS SURE TO UNDERSTAND

WHY THIS BOOK IS

DEDICATED TO HER

NANCY GOES TO TOWN

I

NANCY YATES, her cheeks pink, her eyes dancing, leaned forward and chuckled joyously.

"Of course I'll tell you why I'm going to town," she said very confidentially. "It's to find Prince Moneybags! And when I find him——" She stopped to nod her head and to bring one tightly closed fist down on the other tightly closed fist with a determination which would have made any prince shake in whatever kind of shoes he wore. "It's really because I am such a lazy, selfish creature that I'm going hunting in this training school for nurses," she added eagerly, as if she realized that her first statement required a garnish to make it at all palatable.

Her advisory committee stared at her with eight curious eyes, a frown, a snort, a gasp and a grin. The advisory committee had heard never a word of Nancy Yates' big plan, for Nancy was occasionally stingy with her confidences. Sometimes she could wait until her bridge was burning behind her before she told any one that she had set it on fire.

"Then people can find fault if they choose," she told Nancy Yates. "But they can't make you go back if your bridge is in ashes."

And if there was one thing which Nancy Yates loathed more than tapioca pudding it was interference. Ever since Doctor Yates died, almost a year before, and left Nancy the sole representative of the Yates family, the friends in Mifflin, and that meant every man, woman and child in Mifflin, had wondered audibly and mentally what on earth Nancy Yates was going to do. But Nancy kept her own counsel. She never told even her advisory committee until she had received the application blanks from the hospital training school.

It was the first really warm spring evening, and the advisory committee had met on the Purdy steps. There was Uncle Ben Purdy, the editor of the Mifflin *Gazette,* and the man who had been the closest to Doctor Yates. It was impossible for Nancy to remember the day when she had not known and loved Uncle Ben and Aunt Alice Purdy, and her imagination refused to tell her what she would have done after her father's death if Uncle Ben and Aunt Alice had not taken her into their home and loved and petted her. But neither of them could see the world as she saw it. They were old. Why, Uncle Ben was fifty, if he was a day! And fat and bald! And Aunt Alice was almost fifty, too! Twenty-year-old Nancy saw no difference between fifty and a hundred. Age was age, and a few years were as nothing.

Doris Sutherland was on the step below Uncle Ben. Mifflin had unhesitatingly awarded the golden apple to Doris, and she was pretty in the most delectable pink and white sort of a way. She had been Nancy's dearest friend ever since they were babies, and although now she did not always follow Nancy's head she kept up with her feet fairly well, well enough anyway to be heard when she exclaimed breathlessly, as she always did: "Why, Nancy Yates!"

And beside Doris was Mr. George Yardley, who was old, also, actually twenty-six on his last birthday. He was tall and slim and had beautifully smooth hair, like a cap of black satin. He had recently exchanged the excitement of Waloo for the dullness of Mifflin and was the teller in the Mifflin Bank of which his Uncle was president. If you have ever lived in a small town you can imagine what a flutter there was the first day that George drove his yellow roadster, whose shiny body was the pride of his heart, and whose engine was very frequently the despair of his brain, down Main Street, and although that was over six months ago, there were many feminine hearts which still fluttered whenever he drove anywhere, for George had a city manner and city clothes and, according to Doris, was a thorough man of the world, whatever she may have meant by that.

The fourth member of the advisory committee was young Master Purdy, who attended the eighth grade of the Lincoln School when he could not find

an excuse which would satisfy his mother, and who was quite convinced that the world was run all wrong, and who knew that if he were only left alone he would awake some morning, when he was the proper age, all educated and equipped to do a man's work. Until then it was most annoying to be told to wash behind his ears or to be sure and study his arithmetic. He was far more interested in the cookie jar than he was in either clean ears or arithmetic.

Age, experience, beauty and youth was the way Nancy described her advisory committee, and when it was too late to take their advice she called the members together to talk over her plans with an intensity which aroused their interest if it failed to obtain their approval. Nancy was always tense. When she called to you: "Hello! Isn't it a peach of a day," you knew that she felt the day's peachiness to her very toes.

So it was not until she had the application blanks from the nurses' training school of the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital all filled out and ready for the recommendation of her rector, her doctor and "a prominent business man" that she told them what she was going to do.

"I'm tired of being so poor that I have to think twice before I buy a postage stamp," she said in her soft, clear voice, which was one of the things you especially liked about Nancy Yates. "Dear old daddy! It wasn't his fault that he didn't leave me rolling in gold. When I think of the way he slaved

and slaved for a bare existence I want to go right out and sandbag the first fat millionaire I see. There is only one way that a girl can steal from a man without being locked up, and I don't intend to spend my life in jail. I shall stay within the law," she kindly told Uncle Ben so that he would not worry. "That's why I'm going to this Hawks Hospital. You can't get blood from a turnip, and if I want to live in a palace I have to leave this turnip field of a town and go where the money kings live. I have looked over the industrial situation pretty carefully, and I have decided to be a trained nurse. No prince will be able to get away from me if he is in bed with a broken back or a temperature of a hundred and six. He will be helpless, and I can marry him and change myself into a princess before he can wink."

"Why, Nancy Yates!" gasped Doris, aghast at such very plain speaking before Mr. George Yardley. Doris never minded what Nancy said before Uncle Ben or Warren, but she did think that Nancy should choose her words when in the presence of the teller of the Mifflin Bank. Doris would have died a thousand deaths before she would ever let George Yardley hear that she planned to marry a prince of any kind. And Moneybags! She didn't see how Nancy could!

Nancy made a face at her and rushed on. The teller of the Mifflin Bank was only two ears to Nancy when he sat on her advisory committee.

"Sure I can!" she insisted. "And what shall I

do if I don't study nursing? I could mortgage my future and finish college and teach, but I'd sooner die. I can't spell well enough to be a private secretary, and my knowledge of colons and semicolons is of the most casual sort. Any king of industry would be so occupied with swearing at me that he would never think of marrying me. And I hate business! No, I've looked over all the openings for a lazy, selfish girl, whose father went without things he needed to send her to college for two years, and nursing offers me the best opportunity for quick returns. I have to live while I'm learning anything, you know, and in the hospital I'll be paid ten dollars a month besides my board and room." She chuckled at the amount she would be paid. "And I'll be given the very best chance to capture a millionaire. I want to be rich and wallow in luxury," she told them frankly. "I want a garage full of automobiles and a house full of bathrooms and old mahogany and a closet full of the smartest clothes and a pantry full of spring chicken and chocolate marshmallow cake and candied sweet potatoes and fresh peach ice cream. And the only way I can get these absolute necessities is to steal them from some poor defenseless rich man. In a hospital the men will be at a disadvantage. I can take my time to look over the rich ones and choose the best. Statistics," she looked wisely at Uncle Ben, "statistics show that more trained nurses marry rich men than workers in any other line. Look at these." She took a collec-

tion of clippings from Uncle Ben's "exchanges" from the pocket of her worn serge skirt and distributed them as if for a game of bridge. "If you read these with any intelligence at all you will see that I am right. That young millionaire, Doris, married the girl who nursed him through the measles. And that middle-aged millionaire, Uncle Ben, married the girl who nursed him through the mumps. An automobile accident, George Yardley, gave a nurse the chance to become the bride of another millionaire. And, Warren, you see that Birdie Maguire met the only son of the oil king when she took care of him after a football game had broken three of his ribs and one of his legs. What girls have done, a girl can do! Uncle Ben," she tweaked his ear, "can you see any fairly good reason in the offing why I shouldn't marry the millionaire I nurse through something?"

Uncle Ben shook his head and puffed at his cigar. He knew his Nancy, and experience had taught him that there was little use in trying to argue with her when she was on her high horse. He thought that she was on a very high horse as she explained her plans and gave her reasons, and so he only grunted.

"Not a reason. As you say, your victim will be down and out. He won't have a chance. But, Nance, I'd give a good deal if you would stay here in Mifflin with us, and let me make a newspaper girl out of you. You would make a good newspaper girl," he promised.

Nancy's fingers dropped from his ear to his hand

and gave it a hard squeeze. "Didn't I say I couldn't spell and that I think a colon belongs somewhere inside of you? And would you have me marry your devil or your boss printer? If you were only a bachelor, Uncle Ben!" She regarded him covetously before she laughed and hugged him. "But Aunt Alice is in the best of health, bless her! She hasn't lost a pound since I came to stay with you. What do you say, Peaches?" And she pulled a straying lock of Doris' hair, which was the exact color of ripe corn.

Doris sighed enviously. She wished that she could make outrageous statements as easily as Nancy Yates. "It would be gorgeous to have the closet full of new clothes and chocolate marshmallow cake and old mahogany, but I should hate to take care of sick people. And you couldn't be sure you would ever nurse a millionaire, Nance! Maybe you wouldn't have any one but poor people!" Her big blue eyes grew bigger as she presented that awful possibility to Nancy.

"Pooh!" Nancy refused to be discouraged. "I shall keep my eye on the front door and snatch the first millionaire who enters. I don't care what baggage he carries, smallpox or scarlet fever or even whooping-cough. Don't you worry your darling yellow head about that, Doris, my love. And what does finance think of this investment I plan to make with my youth and beauty?" She turned to Mr. George Yardley, who was frowning at a huge spirea bush until the little new leaves shook with fear.

Was it possible that they had come out too soon? "Don't you think it promises big returns?" And she peeped at him from under her long lashes.

His face turned a violent and painful red. "It's a darned poor scheme if you ask me!" he exclaimed in a voice which was an excellent match for his angry color. "I hate to hear a girl talk of marrying a man for his money! It sounds so——" He choked and was unable to tell her how it sounded until he had cleared his throat of the lump which had climbed into it. "So mercenary!" he finished explosively.

"But I *am* mercenary!" She acknowledged it shamelessly. "And you would be mercenary too if you had my past. If you could have seen the way people took advantage of my blessed father, of his big heart and clever brains and strong hands! You can take it from me, George Yardley, that there isn't anything in being unselfish and generous! Father had too much heart, and perhaps I have too much head. Who was it who said that the first twenty years of a person's life belong to the heart and the second twenty years to the head? I'm in the head period now. I've spent the first twenty years, the heart years, and I'm not going to let myself get sentimental—ever! I am going to look on life as a business. That is what it really is when you get right down to brass tacks. And you get out of it just exactly what you work for. I want the things that money can buy, and so I'm going to work for money. Don't you think I am right, Buster?"

And she addressed the fourth member of her advisory committee.

"You bet!" Young Warren never hesitated even the fraction of a second in his hearty indorsement. "And I hope when you get that pantry of yours you'll give me a key to it. I don't care for your old mahogany nor your bathrooms, but I'll help you exercise your automobiles, and I'll help you eat your fresh peach ice cream."

"Good boy!" She patted his rumpled head. "And I'll take care of you when you break your nose playing full back on the 'varsity team. I'm glad you approve. I'd hate to do something none of you approve of, but I just can't be poor and live in a hole all of my life. I shan't be! I can't set the world on fire myself. I'm not clever enough, so I must find some one who can do it, and who will let me hold the matches. If I were tall and slinky and had black hair and eyes I'd borrow a thousand dollars from you, Uncle Ben, and buy a black satin gown and a big red rose and long jet earrings and be a vampire, but as I'm only a red-headed dumpling I'll have to find my own way to a bank account. Some rich man will just have to marry me if I refuse to give him his medicine until he does."

They all laughed, not so much at what she said as at the way she said it. Then Doris looked at her curiously and asked suddenly:

"Why do you always put your worst foot foremost, Nancy Yates? You know very well that you

are going to be a nurse because you are like your father and want to help people. You know——"

"Yes, I do know!" Nancy interrupted with fierce scorn. "And the person I want to help is Nancy Mary Yates. The world owes me more than a living," she insisted, the color deepening in her cheeks. "It owes me a million dollars, and I'm not going to waste any time in collecting it. I'm not giving any thought to any one but myself. Daddy did that and look at the life he had. No, indeedy, I'm not thinking of a single solitary person but Nancy Mary Yates, unless, perhaps," she made the concession with a giggle and in response to Doris' quick protest, "it is my opulent prince!"

Uncle Ben took his cigar from his mouth and regarded it with a frown before he looked at Nancy. "I suppose you believe about a quarter of the nonsense you talk, Nance," he said slowly. "But let me tell you something my fifty years have taught me. This isn't any world for selfish people. It is a place for 'we' and not for 'me,' for you can't travel very far nor very high when you travel alone. You have got to work or play with some one, with people. You can't do anything alone. It's together! And it is a funny thing but you can't really help yourself without helping some other fellow. You can't really do anything alone!"

"What a nice little sermon." Nancy squeezed his hand again. "And it is on the same text I've been talking about all evening. You understand per-

fectly why I must go to town and look up that prince, for together—together, Uncle Ben!—we will go a long, long way, believe me!" And she giggled. "Don't you hope that I shall find him soon?"

II

NANCY was perfectly right. She was not of the type to wear slinky black satin and long jet earrings and be a vampire. Neither was she beautiful enough to go out into the world in her shabby serge and conquer Fate. Nancy had lovely hair, soft and fine and with red lights in the brown fluff, and she had the soft creamy skin which goes with red-brown hair. But her eyes were small and set a trifle too far apart, and her nose was crooked, and her mouth was big. But if any girl ever had teeth like the milky white kernels of an ear of corn that girl was Nancy Mary Yates. And like Christina of Denmark, "when she smiled came two pits in her cheeks which improved her appearance mightily." Nancy smiled fully seven-eighths of the time so that she seldom looked as plain as she really was. And she had a way with her which made merely pretty girls bite their red lips and think unhappily that beauty was nothing but ashes, a squeezed lemon or any other useless thing.

Although Nancy presented a bright and cheerful bungalow front to Mifflin as she packed her trunk, she really felt like an old and neglected family mansion. She was closing the last chapter of the first volume of the life of Nancy Mary Yates, and if the book held many sorrows it also contained many

joys, and she found herself strangely loath to put it away and start another, for one never could tell what the future,—the most mysteriously tantalizing word in the dictionary,—has in store for a red-headed girl. But Nancy had youth, and she had courage, and deep down in her heart underneath the little homesick feeling, she knew that she wanted to go on, she did not want to settle down in Mifflin for the remainder of her days, no matter how dear and kind the people were. She shook her head when Uncle Ben and Aunt Alice asked her again to live with them.

"You are perfect dears!" She winked back the tears which would spring to her eyes. "But you don't want me to become a fat white parasite. I can't sponge off of you another minute although I love you more than tongue can tell. And it will help to ballast me to know that you are here loving me and expecting me to do big things. You do expect me to do big things, don't you?"

"Of course we do!" Uncle Ben patted her hand. "You are bound to do something big if you get the chance."

"But I wish, Nancy," sighed Aunt Alice, "that you wouldn't talk so foolishly about marrying a millionaire. You quite shocked Mrs. Merrick. It's silly in a girl of your age."

"Silly!" Nancy elevated her crooked nose. "It's silly of Mrs. Merrick to be shocked because a girl says what she thinks. And I don't care a picayune what people say. There is a voice inside of me,

right here," she tapped her strong young chest to show Aunt Alice exactly where the voice was located, "which tells me what to do, and for the last six months it has said quite plainly: 'Nancy Mary Yates, put on your hat and go and nurse the sick. Prince Moneybags is waiting for you.' It isn't silly, and it isn't as selfish as I thought it was for I'm moved by the two strongest forces in the world, self-preservation and the future of the race. I want to be taken care of myself, and I want my children to have everything there is in the world for children to have. I guess that's a high and lofty motive! I do hope, Aunt Alice, that you aren't a Victorian remnant which thinks that girls should stay at home and be sought? Statistics,—eh, Uncle Ben? —should have shown you that the proportion of unmarried males and females is far from encouraging to the unattractive female who wants to be supported. The up-to-the-minute girl who is ambitious and a good judge of character and knows what she wants isn't going to sit at home and be passed by. She is going out to do her own choosing. That's what I'm going to do. I'm a predatory woman. You'd be a predatory woman, too," she nodded encouragingly to the horrified Aunt Alice, "if you hadn't been born until twenty years ago."

But Aunt Alice knew she never would, and she could not understand Nancy Yates. She told Uncle Ben she could not the minute that they were alone.

"Nance is all right!" Uncle Ben was loyal to the core. "She talks a lot of nonsense, all girls do, but

don't worry about her. Her heart is all right if her tongue is foolish. She'll never be able to forget that she is the daughter of Harry Yates!"

"I wonder," fussed Aunt Alice.

"I know!" insisted Uncle Ben. "Didn't she go out to Barty's in all sorts of weather last winter, every day, to dress Esther's arm when Esther burned it? Nance is just like her father, ready to share her last penny with you."

George Yardley fussed, too. Although he was middle Edward and Aunt Alice was middle Victorian, they held many thoughts in common, and George disliked extremely to hear Nancy talk of princes. He disliked it so much that he went around one evening and gave young Warren a quarter if Warren would go to the movies and leave him alone with Nancy so that he could ask her to share the hundred dollars which the Mifflin Bank paid him every month.

"Why, George Yardley!" Nancy had never been more surprised. "You can't live on a hundred dollars a month yourself. You've said so hundreds of times. And clever as I am, I can't make enough for two out of what won't do for one. If I were a different sort of a girl, domestic and crazy over my needle and my egg beater, like Doris," slyly, "I might be interested in an experiment in household management, but I'm not, and I don't think I ever shall be. You are a dear to offer to share what you have with me," she told him, and her voice shook, "but you need it all for yourself. Yes, you

do! I am frightfully fond of you, but I might as well tell you the truth. You are far, far too poor for me!"

"The old dear!" she told Uncle Ben. "As if I would hamper him with a penniless wife just as he is starting out to make his fortune. He needs every penny he has for himself. I don't mind taking advantage of some man. I quite look forward to it!" And, indeed, her eyes sparkled and her dimples flashed. "But I can't take advantage of an old friend in Mifflin. I would do anything to help George Yardley, but I don't love him, and I don't want him to think he is in love with me. And he hasn't enough! What is a hundred dollars? Why, it wouldn't buy more than the tire for the front wheel of the golden limousine in which I plan to ride!"

Uncle Ben looked into her flushed face and shook his head, but he did not utter the words which were on his lips. What was the use? Nancy knew that he understood why she had refused to consider George's offer to share what he had with her. Nancy knew what Uncle Ben thought of her and that he would miss her as he did the sunshine on a cloudy day, but there were some things that it did not do to talk about. Grumbling never yet has brought sunshine to any one.

So Nancy had her rector and Doctor Jarvis, who had taken her father's practice, and George Yardley's uncle, the president of the Mifflin Bank, swear that her character was spotlessly white, which they

did with a certain fuming indignation that any one, even the head of a nurses' training school, should presume to ask questions about the character of Nancy Yates. Nancy turned a patient, if unheeding, ear to the many friends who felt privileged to tell her what a big mistake she was making. Mifflin, to a man, thought that she should stay in Mifflin, where she was known and where every one was eager to help her. No one knew what a stab it really was for Nancy to leave the little town which had always been her home. She could scarcely remember the mother, who had died when she was seven years old, but Mifflin was hallowed with the memories of the father she had adored. She fiercely resented the unuttered criticism that if Doctor Yates had provided for his only child as he should have done Nancy would not have to go out in the world to seek her fortune.

"I wouldn't be a doctor nor marry a doctor for all the diamonds in Africa!" she exclaimed fiercely. "A doctor is the grandest, most unselfish creature in the world, but there isn't a man living who gets as little out of life. I guess I know! I lived with one for nineteen years. Why, a doctor can't go to a movie, he can't go to a dance, nor to church, he can't even go to bed! but some one pulls him out to look at a sore finger or listen to a whine about an imaginary ache. And as for meals! I'm surprised that father lived as long as he did. I'm glad that there are men in the world noble and unselfish enough to practice medicine, but I don't want

another of them in my life. What I want is a feeble-minded millionaire in the last stages of something and without a relative in the world. And if I don't find him in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital I shall die of grief and disappointment!"

The advisory committee accompanied her to the train. So did many other people. Lottie Andrews had made a box of her black walnut fudge, and Mrs. Markell, whose nerves had been the special torment of both Doctor Yates and Nancy, had made a fresh cocoanut cake. Old Judge Conolly had a bundle of new magazines and Miss Sarcom, the newest novel which had come to Mifflin. Every one seemed to have something, and the little packages brought the tears to Nancy's eyes.

"You dears!" She was almost choked by the lump in her throat. "You won't miss me half as much as I shall miss you. But we shan't talk about my going away, we'll talk about my coming back."

"I did think," she told the advisory committee, "that when I came back I should dash up in a shiny big limousine and look at Mifflin through a platinum lorgnette, but now I rather fancy that I'll stop and hug everybody. And to think that I thought father wasn't appreciated! Oh, I shall always love this old town! It was the birthplace, you know, of an ambitious young woman, who plans to cut quite a wide path through the world. I feel like Christopher Columbus," she confessed with a laugh, which had a sob hidden in it somewhere. "Discovering and capturing an incurable millionaire should be

as exciting as hunting for a new world. Uncle Ben, I shan't let any paper but the *Gazette* announce my engagement to the prince. I hope you'll give me a good place on the front page. You have my photo, and I'll send you his. George Yardley, you may tell your uncle that if he will double your salary I'll keep a million or two on deposit in the Mifflin Bank. Doris, I can't very well have a church wedding in a hospital, but you shall still be my maid of honor and visit me in my palace. You may borrow my diamonds for as long as you wish. And, Buster, I'll have your monogram put on the niftiest little roadster in the market so that you will feel free to use it. Is that the train? Good-by, you dear, dear people!" She choked in spite of her gay words and turned quickly to the train, which had dashed to the station and was snorting impatiently, as if it just could not wait to carry Nancy Mary Yates away from Mifflin. "I don't know what I'll do without your advice," she called from the steps. And she laughed tremulously, for she never had taken one word of their advice, and they knew it as well as she did. "Wish me luck!" she exclaimed peremptorily. "Wish me the best of luck!"

They just had time to wish her the best of luck and to hear her call "Good-by" when the snorting engine dashed away from the station. It seemed to carry the sunshine from Mifflin. Uncle Ben muttered something under his breath. George swore softly, and Doris wiped her eyes, while young War-

ren kicked impatiently at the trunk of an innocent traveling man.

"That girl," exclaimed Uncle Ben as if he just had to voice the words, "isn't afraid of anything in the world, and she is the kind who will laugh no matter what dirty trick Fate plays her. She tried to make us think that she is an empty-headed fool——"

"Uncle Ben!" gasped Doris.

"But she has a heart so big that it will get her into trouble some day, or I miss my guess. She's her father's daughter, and she'll never be able to turn her back on any one who needs help."

"Do you think so?" George Yardley's voice shook with eagerness, and his face brightened. He knew some one who sadly needed help from Nancy Yates.

"I don't think," corrected Uncle Ben, as once he had corrected Aunt Alice, "I know!"

III

"I HOPE," remarked Miss Etta Bidnell, the superintendent of nurses at the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital, as she looked with quickly appraising eyes at Nancy Yates, quite as if Nancy had been a bolt of white cloth, and Miss Bidnell was not sure whether she was all linen or whether she was three parts cotton, "I hope that you are not taking up nursing with any idea of marrying a millionaire."

Nancy jumped. A superintendent who was also a mind reader could be very annoying to the student in any training school.

"Well," she drawled the word with an odd little twist to her lips which might mean anything, "I don't suppose that you wish your nurses to neglect completely your millionaire patients. And if I didn't believe in romance I should hate to think that I must live to be seventy years old."

"Romance!" Miss Bidnell slightly elevated her very Roman nose. "Romance has no place in a well ordered hospital."

Nancy opened her mouth to insist that there should be a place for romance wherever there was a place for people, but she changed her mind. She would not begin her hospital training with an argument with the superintendent. She never even asked Miss Bidnell, as she yearned to ask, if the

germ of romance had been isolated in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital. She just looked pleasantly interested and thought how white and smooth and shiny Miss Bidnell was in her uniform, like a huge frosted cake.

Nancy had chosen the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital not because its training school offered superior advantages, but because its staff was composed of the most prominent physicians and surgeons in Waloo, and she was sure that the most prominent doctors in a city would have the wealthiest patients, the Moneybags and their cousins, the Golds and Silvers and the Yellowbacks.

"When you are looking for a cabbage you naturally go to a man who sells cabbages," she told Nancy Yates. "You'd never think of going to a florist."

Nancy had visualized the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital as having a millionaire in every bed. And it was from one of these helpless rich men that she meant to steal the fortune which would enable her to move over into the very lap of luxury.

In spite of the fact that she was the daughter of a doctor, she had never been in a hospital, and she looked with eager curiosity at the huge pile of red brick and cream marble, punctured with so many shining windows, which had the name of Geoffrey Williston Hawks in gold letters over the front entrance. At either end of the hospital was a large sun porch and the building was "tied" to the ground with much shrubbery. The grounds were ample and

elaborately landscaped and gardened. Altogether it looked like exactly the right place in which to find a prince, Nancy told Nancy Yates, before she wondered idly what the City Hospital was like, if the poor people of Waloo had as much red brick and white marble and glass and fluffy white spirea. She hoped they did, although it would make no difference to her if they never did. She was not going to have another thing to do with poor people. She was through with poverty, absolutely through.

She hesitated as she went up the broad steps, and as she mounted the last one a man in a white suit threw open the door.

"My gracious!" murmured Nancy. "If this is the reception committee, Nancy Mary Yates, you will have to mind your p's and q's." She was all bubbly and excited inside, but on the outside her face was as sober as the face of the minister preaching the Sunday morning sermon in the Methodist Church.

But if the man in the white suit was a reception committee he failed lamentably in his duties, for he stalked right by Nancy to the top of the broad steps to look down the driveway.

"My mistake," Nancy murmured to Nancy Yates with an inward giggle and an outward sniff. "Must be a worthless house doctor or an orderly. If he knew my honest opinion of doctors he wouldn't hold his head quite so high. Oh, dear! I wonder if I am going to like it! I never thought that I should be shut up with young doctors as well as old patients. I shall die if Uncle Ben is right, and I have

made a mistake. Do I ring or knock or go right in?" She looked uncertainly from the wide open door to the man, who was so eagerly scanning the driveway, as if he expected something to happen on it immediately. "He can't do more than eat me," she decided, and in her softest voice she asked for information. "I beg your pardon, but do I ring?"

He gave her a very stingy glance, as if a small girl in a shabby blue serge and an equally shabby hat was not worth a more generous look, before he ran down the steps to speak to a motor car which was just driving up, and he threw a few words to her over his shoulder.

"Go right in. The office is at the left."

She made a face at his white back and then crossed the Rubicon in one bold step. But she had to stop short just inside the door and sniff the hospital smell. She liked it. If it had been the most concentrated odor of violets, she could not have liked it half as well, for it reminded her of her father's office in Mifflin. She could not feel strange or lonely while she had that clean, wholesome odor, but she could feel homesick, and she winked rapidly as she entered the office where Miss Bidnell sat, like a big frosted cake on a pantry shelf.

Miss Bidnell asked after her health and her education and nodded approval when Nancy declared that she had never been ill a day in her life except when she had scarlet fever and the measles, and that she had had two years in college. Miss Bidnell

liked healthy college girls in her training school. And she liked Nancy's face. She was glad that Nancy was not pretty. A pretty nurse so often meant trouble. And then she told Nancy in a dry scornful voice that romance would not be tolerated for one minute in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital. Any nurse who found such a germ was to destroy it immediately with large doses of the hardest kind of work.

Nancy tossed her head as she followed the nurse who was detailed to take her to the nurses' home which clung to the hospital by a short passageway much as a chubby youngster clings to his mother's skirts with a fat little hand. It was a very attractive home, for Geoffrey Williston Hawks or his architect had realized that student nurses would be young women who would appreciate big sunny rooms and wide halls, and what was the very best of all to Nancy Yates' brown eyes, a tiny room for each student. It was so tiny that there was not much space in the room when it was furnished with a little white bed and a white dresser and two white chairs drawn up on either side of the white table which stood in the window, not half enough space in which to swing a cat, but as Nancy had not come to the hospital for cat swinging she was not disappointed. She looked at the white, rather austere room as if it had been hung with the gayest of chintzes and carpeted with the rarest of rugs. She had not hoped to have a room to herself.

"God bless old Geoffrey Williston Hawks!" she murmured fervently.

"You'll just have time to unpack before lunch," explained her guide. "You might put on your probationer's dress, because after lunch you are to report to the corridor nurse on the second floor. Only to answer bells while the special nurses are off duty," she said, as Nancy gasped to hear that her training was to begin without the loss of so much as a minute. "You won't have to do anything but ask the patients what they want." Nora Taylor laughed as she remembered how frightened she had been the first day she was in the training school. "The corridor nurse will do the work. When you hear the bell come down to lunch. The dining room is on the left. Yes, this is a dandy home. You should see the shacks the nurses in some of the hospitals have to live in. How did you like Miss Bidnell? Of course we call her Biddy, and the name seems to fit. She's certainly the stiffly starched proposition. What she doesn't see doesn't happen. And strict! You better believe you can't put anything over on her. Yes, we are pretty full now, but this place is always full. You don't live in Waloo, do you? Well, I'll see you at lunch."

Instead of unpacking as she had been told to do, Nancy went to the window and looked out over the spacious garden. There was a city park just beyond the hospital grounds, and in the center of the park was a small lake. Nancy liked the wide open space. It gave her a sense of freedom. She rather thought

she was going to like the hospital, and she knew she would have adored old Geoffery Williston Hawks if she could have known him. She wished she could thank him for her little white room. What a Prince Moneybags he would have made! And she deeply regretted the fact that Geoffrey Williston Hawks had been in Hillside Cemetery for five years.

She was still standing by the window staring at the garden and thinking of Geoffrey Williston Hawks and the young man in the white suit, who had burst out of the hospital like a reception committee and turned his back to her like a member of the family, and Miss Bidnell and George Yardley and Doris and Lottie Andrews' box of black walnut fudge and the clean hospital smell which made her think of her father, when the clang of a bell made her jump. That must be the lunch bell! And she had not put on the probationer's blue gingham as Nora Taylor had suggested! She tore open her suit-case. Of course the blue gingham was at the very bottom. She tumbled what was on top on the bed. It would never do to begin her training by being late. She pinned on her apron, and without waiting to ask the mirror how she looked, she ran down the stairs and turned to the left of the hall.

The big sunny room seemed full of white starch, but there was no stiffness in the faces which turned curiously toward her. Nora Taylor nodded and

pointed to a vacant place beside her. Nancy slipped into it gratefully.

After the first glance no one paid any attention to the new, scarlet-cheeked probationer, and Nancy ate her luncheon to a confused gabble of what "she said" and of what "he did," "she" meaning, nine times out of ten, a patient and "he" referring to the doctor.

"Miss Yates, is it?" asked Mabel Morse, the corridor nurse, when Nancy stood beside her and breathlessly explained that she had been told to report to her. Miss Morse seemed a very busy young woman as she sat at the big desk, covered with charts, which commanded the corridor. "Just keep your eye on the indicator and answer the bells, will you? Yes, Doctor Minor?" And she turned questioningly to a short, chubby, middle-aged man with a round rosy face and hair which had not been able to decide whether to be black or white and which had compromised on an attractive pepper and salt combination.

But Doctor Minor never looked at her, he was too busy looking at Nancy.

"Yates," he repeated. "Now I wonder—— You look as if you might be a daughter of Harry Yates?" he said abruptly.

"Oh, I am!" Nancy dimpled and flushed. It was so wonderful to hear of her father the very first day she was in the hospital, and she looked at the short, chubby, middle-aged man with grateful eyes.

"And you're going to be a nurse? Fine, fine!" Doctor Minor had offered her a cordial hand into which Nancy's fingers slipped eagerly. "Your father's daughter should make a good nurse. But why don't you study medicine?" he asked suddenly as if he thought that Harry Yates' daughter should make a good doctor as well as a good nurse.

"A doctor!" Nancy was amazed. "Why on earth should I want to be a doctor? I have had quite enough of doctors in my family!"

Doctor Minor laughed and said he didn't blame her, that a doctor was a trying animal to have in any family, but she must remember that a nurse was almost a doctor.

"You come from——Yes, Mifflin. Pity your father lost himself in a country practice. He should have stayed in Waloo and built up a national reputation. I suppose some one must look after the small towns, but a man like Harry Yates——I hope you'll be happy here," he broke off to say, and it sounded as if he really did wish that Harry Yates' daughter would be happy in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital. "I promise you will be kept busy, eh, Miss Morse? You'll have to keep an eye on this young woman," he warned Miss Morse. "Her father was always cutting capers. I know because he usually gave me the scissors to hold. Harry Yates was the best friend I had in college. We swore we would keep in touch with each other, and in five years we had drifted so far apart that he didn't know where I was, and I didn't know where

he was. Lord, but you bring it all back, my dear! I haven't thought of those jolly old days for years. You make me young again. I'm glad I met you."

Nancy looked after him as he walked away. It was hard for her to believe that her father and that fat little old man had even been in college together. Why, Doctor Minor looked like an elder brother to Methusaleh, and her father——She winked to keep the tears in her eyes instead of letting them spill over on her pink cheeks and took the chair Miss Morse offered her.

Miss Morse smiled pleasantly. If Nancy was going to be the special pet of Doctor Alexander Minor it would be just as well to smile at her and with her.

"Nice to find an old friend," she said sympathetically. "While you are waiting for the bell, suppose you learn how to make applicators? You'd never believe how many applicators a hospital uses in a day." And she showed Nancy how to take a fluff of white cotton and twirl it around a wisp of wood and make a useful surgical appliance.

Nancy had made hundreds of applicators for her father, thousands of them, and she could turn out perfect appliances without taking her eyes from the long finger of the indicator. Any moment the bell might call her. Her heart thumped a bit, and the color deepened in her cheeks. It was thrilling, absolutely thrilling, to sit there and calmly make applicators and wait for the call of Fate. Why didn't the bell ring? She would die if she had to wait a second longer!

IV

"WHIR-R—WHIR-R!" The indicator finger shot around the dial and stopped before a number—THIRTEEN! Nancy rubbed her eyes when they told her what the number was. No other figures would have held so much promise or so much romance. She dropped the applicator and jumped to her feet.

"Take your time," smiled Miss Morse. "It doesn't hurt a patient to wait a minute or two. You'll find 'Thirteen' at the end of the corridor."

Nancy nodded. She all but ran down the corridor to the door which bore the magic numbers. Wonder, mystery, romance—she did not care what Miss Bidnell said,—were on the other side of that solid mahogany panel. She caught her breath and knocked softly before she went in on tiptoe, her heart beating so fast that she thought she would surely choke. It was ridiculous to be so excited in every nook and cranny of her, but she was excited. This first service for a patient seemed the most important thing in the world.

But if she expected to see the long fat rolls of bank notes with a head of shiny gold pieces, which she had told Uncle Ben was her idea of a patient in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital, she was sadly disappointed, for the bed contained an elderly

woman with a head like a hawk. Her body raised the covers in a round plump mound. There was nothing emaciated, nothing really ill in her appearance. She did not look a bit like an invalid as she turned her flashing gray eyes toward the door. Nancy's heart stopped thumping when she gazed into the cold gray eyes, and she was actually glad that her first patient was only an old woman. But she must be a member of the Moneybags family for she looked like a duchess with her marceled gray hair, her hawklike features and the pretty lavender negligee about her shoulders. There were embroidered sheets on the bed instead of the plain hospital linen, and the pillow slips were embroidered also.

Nancy's eyes widened when they saw how the room was furnished. It did not look a bit like a hospital. Gay lavender and pink flowers clambered all over the chintz hangings and the cushions of the white willow chairs. On the white dresser was a huge bunch of pink roses. Through the open door Nancy had a glimpse of a white tiled bathroom. The charming little suite whispered to her of luxury and expense but it never even hinted a word about a hospital. Nancy's swift inventorying glance returned to the Duchess. She thought she had never seen such cold, piercing eyes and such a hard, calculating mouth. Why, the mouth was only a thin purple line below the beaklike nose. And her hands were long and thin, like the claws of a huge bird.

"When you are quite through staring at me I

should like a glass of water." Every word had a long white icicle hung to it.

The cold sarcasm was nipping. It sent the color stinging into Nancy's face, and she felt a strong inclination to turn her back and slam the door hard behind her.

"I—I didn't mean to stare," she stammered, when she had decided to remain long enough to utter an apology. "You see I have just come, and you are my first patient." She made an effort to smile brightly as she had been told that a nurse should always smile at a patient.

But this patient did not want smiles. She wanted a glass of water, and she repeated her request with an unpleasant addition: "It isn't necessary to tell me that you are incompetent as well as rude."

At that Nancy did turn and run out of the room. No one had ever spoken to her in quite that fashion, and she was hurt as well as angry. If this hawklike old Duchess was a fair sample of a patient, Nancy was almost sorry that she had not remained in Mifflin and been made into a newspaper girl. Nancy had not planned on any snapping, snarling patients, who said that she was rude and incompetent. The patients she had pictured had smiled at her and told her that she was wonderful.

She left the room so hurriedly and had to wink so fast to keep the hurt tears in her eyes that she could not see where she was going, and in a flash she had bumped into a white tower.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in dismay. She stopped

winking and stepped back to look up and up until she could see what topped the white clothes. She found a man's head, like a lantern on a lighthouse, a head with a pair of blue eyes below a black frown and above a very firm mouth and a very square chin. Nancy caught a quick breath before she frowned, too, although the white tower did look so white and so capable. The hospital seemed littered with doctors. There was the one at the door and Doctor Minor and now this frowning white tower. She murmured a word of apology.

He scarcely heard her. He was anxiously looking at a glass jar which he carried in his hand, as if he feared that the contents had been injured.

"You should look where you are going!" he said impatiently, and then he added more gently. "This is Mrs. Bernard Griffen's appendix."

It sounded like an introduction, and Nancy had to chuckle. It was so funny to be introduced to an appendix. But the tall white tower regarded his glass jar as fondly as a housewife would gaze at her most cherished strawberry and pineapple conserve.

"Oh, is it!" Nancy wondered what was the proper response to an introduction to an appendix and her chuckle grew into a laugh. It was so droll. The white tower looked at her, really looked at her for the first time, and he laughed, also, although he did not know why. But most people laughed when Nancy Yates laughed.

"You are the new probationer, aren't you?" His voice was quite pleasant, smooth and rich like the

best maple syrup. And then he took Nancy's breath away by saying coolly, making the maple syrup frappé: "I hope we shall like you."

Nancy gasped. She wished that she could think of something clever and witty with which to slay him. She discovered that she hated tall white towers with yellow hair brushed back from wide foreheads and with deep sea blue eyes. All she could do was to ice her voice also, and drawl slowly; "It is quite as important that I should like you, isn't it?" And then down the corridor, she heard the indicator calling to her. My goodness, but she was glad to hear it! "Whir-r," it shouted with a furious impatience. "Whir-r!"

"My gracious!" she exclaimed, and without another glance at Mrs. Bernard Griffen's appendix nor at the scoffing white tower she fairly ran to Miss Morse.

"Who is that—that old vulture in Thirteen?" she demanded gaspingly. "She wants a glass of water."

"Of course she does. And she'll want another glass of water in fifteen minutes and another one in another fifteen minutes. She wants to make sure that the nurses aren't slacking. You'll find water and ice in the pantry." And she motioned to an open door behind her.

"You took your time," remarked the vulture Duchess when Nancy had brought her the glass of water.

Nancy bit her lips to keep behind them the indignant words which rushed to her tongue. "Is

there anything else?" She tried to keep her voice cool and even.

"When there is I'll ring," remarked the Duchess.

"Isn't there any rule for the protection of the nurses?" Nancy asked when she was safe with Miss Morse again. "Miss Bidnell said I was not to be impudent nor sarcastic nor flippant to the patients but she never said a word about what the patients should be to me. Who is that old vulture?"

"She is Miss Myrtice Hawks, the daughter of the old Geoffrey who built the hospital. He provided Number Thirteen for the members of his family because he said no one else would want it. And old Myrtice spends most of her time there, to keep the others out, I often think. There really isn't anything the matter with her but an unreasonable temper. When she has a fight with her nephew or her second cousin or when she is puzzled over a business deal—you know she is a famous business woman and has made her own fortune—she comes here and goes to bed and makes life miserable for us. You can look out of the window almost any time and see her coming or going. She's such a poor forlorn old soul if she is rich as cream, for there isn't any one who cares for her. She hasn't any friends, at least no one ever comes to see her here. I'd like to be rich, but I'd hate to be old Myrtice Hawks. There's her bell again. What did I tell you? There is absolutely no reason why she shouldn't get up and get what she wants for herself, but she'll ring until a nurse comes no matter how long she has to wait."

"You may take this glass away," remarked Miss Hawks, more duchesslike than ever, when Nancy stood beside her again. "And find the book I was reading. I suppose the nurse carried it away although I can't think she cared to read about exports. I don't seem able to keep anything, but I'm not the easy mark you girls think."

Nancy had herself under better control then, and she never said a word as she found the book under the pillow where the Duchess had pushed it and took the empty glass and quietly left the room. She never said a word either when she met Mrs. Bernard Griffen's appendix being carried back to the laboratory. The white tower regarded her curiously, and then stared at the door she had closed behind her. The mahogany panel was illuminating.

"How is Miss Hawks?" he asked suddenly, and grinned.

"Bad! Very bad! I mean——" she stammered, for she knew that she should not talk about the patients to men straying around the corridor even if they did wear white clothes.

"I know." He nodded as if he understood. "But we haven't many like Miss Hawks." It almost sounded as if he were trying to cheer her.

Nancy stared at him in dismay. The picture he had presented to her of a hospital full of vultures was awful enough to dismay any probationer. "If you had—"she stopped and then went on impulsively—"If you had I'd resign to-day and go home and marry George Yardley!"

"What was Doctor Jensen talking to you about?" asked Miss Morse, as soon as Nancy had taken up a fluff of cotton and a sliver of wood to make another applicator.

"Doctor Jensen?" Nancy did not know Doctor Jensen from Adam.

"He was talking to you down the corridor," insisted Miss Morse.

"Oh, that!" Nancy shrugged her shoulders. She was not half as interested in Doctor Jensen as she was in her Duchess. "He just introduced me to Mrs. Bernard Griffen's appendix," she said carelessly.

"He did!" Miss Morse looked surprised and then she became communicative. "He is one of the internes, you know, awfully clever and awfully queer. He went to France with a Canadian unit when he was in his junior medic' and was there three years. He's a socialist, I guess, for he doesn't believe in millionaires. I don't know as I do, either. Of course Miss Bidnell told you that the nurses, especially the probationers, aren't supposed to talk to the internes nor the doctors except on business. There goes Miss Hawks' bell again. I suppose she wants another drink," scornfully.

"Isn't there any limit to the amount she may have?" Nancy had read somewhere that there was a limit to the amount a person should drink.

"There isn't any limit to what she can ask for. Run along, if you don't want her to show you what she really can do."

Nancy did not make many applicators that afternoon for Mabel Morse proved to be right. The Duchess did ring her bell every fifteen minutes. Like Horace Walpole, her favorite beverage seemed to be ice water. And when she was not answering the Duchess' bell Nancy carried water to other patients, opened windows, shut windows, filled hot water bottles, found books, arranged flowers, ushered visitors, carried telephone messages and distributed the evening papers.

"It's a great life, isn't it?" she said, when Miss Morse told her that they would call it an afternoon, and she could consider herself free until dinner. "Miss Bidnell knew what she was talking about when she said there wasn't any room for romance in a hospital." She spoke ruefully as if it hurt her to find that Miss Bidnell was right.

"Romance!" sniffed Mabel Morse. "You can't have romance without glamour, and there isn't any glamour in taking care of sick people."

Nancy was woefully afraid that she was right, at least there could not be much glamour in taking care of people like the vulture Duchess.

"It isn't a bit as I thought it was," she told Nancy Yates, as she went slowly up the stairs to her white cell. "Perhaps to-morrow will be better." If it were not for the to-morrows Nancy Yates often thought that she would never be able to live through the to-days.

She forgot all about her disappointment when she saw two letters on her dresser. She caught them

up with eager hands. It seemed years, centuries, since she had left Mifflin. It couldn't be only a few hours. How dear of Uncle Ben and Doris to write to her. They knew how forlorn she would feel. Why! the letters must have come on the train with her.

Uncle Ben's envelope contained just a scrawl to remind her that he and Aunt Alice had offered her a home if she did not like the hospital. She could work on the *Gazette,* and he had always thought that she would make a better newspaper girl than a nurse. "It is never too late to change your mind," he said in his firm black hand.

Nancy had never been so tempted. "It's lucky I have no return ticket and no money," she told Nancy Yates, as she took the letter directed in Doris' pretty hand.

Doris wanted to know if Nancy had found Prince Moneybags yet. If she had she must write at once and tell Doris if he was light or dark. Doris preferred dark men. Blond men looked weak to her. Nancy shrugged her shoulders and wished that Doris could see the white tower who had introduced her to Mrs. Bernard Griffen's appendix. There was nothing weak looking about Doctor Jensen, not even about his yellow hair and blue eyes.

"I do like dark men," Doris repeated, as if to make sure that Nancy would know her taste. "Like George Yardley, you know. George is going to take me to the movies to-night. He will miss you dread-

fully, Nanny, but I shall do my best to keep him from being lonesome. I don't think you were exactly fair to George. He told me what you said about his salary. You should remember how young he is. There are not many young men in Mifflin who are paid a hundred dollars a month. Father thinks he is wonderful and that he will have a big future. You don't want to forget that old Mr. Yardley may leave George all of his money. It would be funny if you went away to slave and find a prince when all the time he was here in Mifflin. I have always liked George awfully, and I am going to be especially nice to him now. I am crazy to hear how you like the hospital? I don't see how you could be so brave as to leave all of your friends and go away to earn your own living. I should die! I told George I should, and he understood exactly how I feel."

Nancy sniffed. Doris seemed to write a lot about George. She took a sheet of paper from her portfolio and scrawled a hurried line.

"DEAR DORIS:—My prince hasn't come to the hospital yet, but I am quite sure that he is not dawdling in Mifflin. If he is not here by to-morrow I shall probably be adopted by a duchess who looks like a vulture—and acts worse."

V

To her great joy, Nancy discovered that she did like the hospital life, and that she fitted into it as an apple fits its skin. At the same time she knew that she never would have lived through the feverishness of that first week if she had not transformed the hospital, with its more or less exacting patients, into a menagerie. It is one thing to spend hours and hours of wonderful May days playing tennis or golf or dancing and a vastly different thing to spend hours and hours running hither and yon, wiping up the ward floors, cleaning bathroom taps and making beds. The one was fun and the other—Nancy groaned when she made the comparison as she dropped into the most comfortable chair in the parlor of the nurses' home. She felt bruised and sore. She could count her muscles by her aches, and she had no bones at all, nothing but jelly. She looked at her two feet which were stretched out in front of her and decided that she hated her feet. She would like to have taken them off and thrown them out of the open window beside her. As for her hands—

"I wonder why on earth we ever came here!" she exclaimed with a weary disgust of the world in general and the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital in particular.

The other nurses, who were loitering by the open

windows waiting for dinner, laughed at her, but there was sympathy as well as amused superiority in their mirth. They could remember when they had felt that their bones had turned to jelly and when they had hated their feet and their hands.

" 'Because of the opportunity the training offers to make life easier for suffering people,' " Dollie Maybie quoted from a recent talk which Miss Bidnell had given the probationers.

The chorus of derision which greeted the well-known phrase was far more realistic than any Wagner motif.

"Yes, we did!" groaned Nancy. "Do you know how many glasses of water I carried to my old Duchess this afternoon? I tried to follow the advice my grandmother used to give and let my head save my heels when I answered her bell, and I took a glass of water with me. But the Duchess glared at the glass and then at me with eyes which looked as if they had been chipped from a block of ice. She had the nerve to say that she hadn't asked for water, that she didn't want water, what she wanted was orange juice. I should have thrown the water over her and drowned her at once if I hadn't remembered that nurses are not allowed to drown their patients. All I could do was to put her into the squeezer with the oranges. My word, but I made beautiful pulp of her! What wouldn't I give for a nice run of typhoid fever, anything that would keep me in bed for twenty-four entire hours!"

But when she had eaten her dinner she was glad

that she had not thrown her feet away for she needed them to dance. With Dollie Maybie she trotted up and down the big living room to the music obligingly furnished by the victrola and laughed when Lydia Peterson reminded her that she had said she was "dead" and that she would have to study her "anatomy" before she went to bed.

"That's why I'm dancing." Nancy waved her hand airily. "To clear my head."

Nancy liked the student nurses, and she liked her fellow probationers. They were such splendid girls, and they did work so hard. No wonder they played hard when they had the chance. There were half a hundred of them when noses were counted and they had come from all parts of the United States and from Canada. There were big girls and little girls, blonds and brunettes, clever girls, who pleased the doctors, and stupid girls, who irritated the surgeons, silly girls and girls who were far, far too sensible.

"It's just like college," Nancy told Nancy Yates the first time she saw them all together, and the regular hours for work and study and recreation were not unlike the well ordered days in college.

As half a college girl, which was the way Nancy spoke of herself because she had had but two years in college, she found the lectures and classes easy. They required very little preparation by her, for in a queer subconscious way she seemed to know much of what the other girls had to study so hard to learn.

"It's heredity," she would tell them comfortingly. "If my father hadn't been a doctor I suppose I

should have to dig for this stuff, too, but as he was a doctor, and a mighty fine doctor—'Uncle Alec' Minor said he was—it comes as easy as pie to me."

She was quicker and more alert than many of the student nurses and than all of the probationers. The doctors noticed it, so did Miss Bidnell.

"It's her college training," Miss Bidnell decided. "I wish we could have all college girls. A girl can't have too much preparation to study nursing."

"You shouldn't give all the credit to the two years Nancy Yates spent in college," "Uncle Alec" Minor said shrewdly. "A lot of it is due to her personality, her assurance and her sense of humor."

But Miss Bidnell would not agree with him. "A nurse can have too strong a sense of humor," she said stiffly, for she did not approve of calling a hospital, the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital, a menagerie. Of course she knew that was what Nancy called it. Miss Etta Bidnell knew everything!

In addition to a vulture Nancy had already located in the different cages—perhaps I should have said rooms—a monkey, a love bird, a porcupine, a peacock and a mouse. It was fun to enlarge the collection. It made the routine work a lot more interesting to give her imagination free play, and if her patients had had any idea of the way they were pictured on her brain screen they would have sent for Miss Bidnell at once and registered a complaint and a protest.

Nancy really enjoyed her patients. She seemed

to know intuitively when pillows should be shaken up, when a patient had eaten the last egg possible and when to read another chapter aloud or when to close the book and slip quietly away. Once on duty, she forgot everything but the sickness and the suffering which she was trying to relieve.

The domestic work was different. She could think of any number of millions as she polished taps or wiped up the floor, and she would wear rubber gloves.

"Why not?" she wanted to know, and when she was told that it was not customary she laughed scornfully. "I can work exactly as well, and the gloves save my hands. The faucets don't care whether I wear them or not, and that prince of mine will make a fuss if my hands are all red and rough. If I can polish these beastly old things with gloves on it stands to reason I could polish them with my bare hands."

Every one was not as crazy about Nancy as Nancy Yates. In spite of her red hair and dimples and her air of *bonhomie* the elevator man thought that she rode up and down in his car too often. Miss Bidnell said that she was too quick to answer back. One of the patients complained that she never had a chance to ask for a hot water bag before Nancy brought her one. The cook grumbled that Nancy fussed about her patients' trays as well as her own food, and the youngest orderly whined that she was always jumping on him because he read the sport page before he brought the evening papers up for the patients.

The first day she made a bed with a patient in it, Nancy felt that she had climbed to the top of a steep hill, and she knew that she had topped a mountain the first time she took a temperature. Her cheeks were scarlet as she left the ward carrying the thermometer as if it were a vase from the high altar. She met Doctor Minor in the hall.

"Hello!" exclaimed "Uncle Alec." "And how is Harry Yates' daughter this morning?"

"She's just taken a temperature, ninety-eight and two-fifths." Nancy could not have expressed more pride if she had taken a doctor's degree with a *cum laude* attachment. "How is Doctor Minor?"

"He's a cross old man with a black grouch," grumbled "Uncle Alec" after he had laughed at Nancy's temperature.

"Then you belong in my menagerie." And she told him of the animals she had found in the hospital.

He chuckled. "That's like your father, to make a game of everything. Yes, you may put me with the bears. It's where I belong. But where does our friend, young Doctor Rolf Jensen, go?" And he nodded toward the interne, who stood beside him.

Nancy just glanced at Rolf's frowning face. "He might have the cage next to you," she suggested demurely.

Rolf Jensen refused to join in "Uncle Alec's" joyous chuckle. He did not consider it proper for a nurse to call a doctor, even an incomplete doctor, a bear to his face, and his frown which had changed

from brown to black told them so as plainly as any words would have done.

"You are a lucky girl," Doctor Minor told Nancy when he had finished his joyous chuckle. "The hard places are never so hard if you can laugh while you are climbing over them. Life isn't all soft for any one. I expect even nurses, probationers, find hard places." And he looked as wise as an owl.

"I don't expect; I know!" Nancy told him quickly. "And I've only been a probationer a scant two weeks. But I'm going to have my share of the soft things. I give you warning that I've a greedy, grasping nature. Why, I belong in my own menagerie!" She was amazed to find where she belonged. "I'm a pig,—a fat greedy pig!"

She looked so little like a fat greedy pig as she stood there in her blue gown and white apron, her eyes laughing, her lips smiling, that Doctor Minor chuckled again, and even Rolf Jensen was obliged to give a demonstration of a bear smiling. But before either of them could say a word Nancy had gone down the corridor with her thermometer.

"That girl's father," Doctor Minor told Rolf Jensen, as his eyes followed Nancy, "was the cleverest chap in my class. Every one expected him to do big things, but he married as soon as he got his degree and was stuck in a little town. He was generous and big-hearted and lazy and those characteristics tripped him up. He let himself be tied to earth by a family before he had learned that he could fly."

"Big mistake!" Rolf Jensen was not going to let himself be tied to earth by anything. You could hear that in the very superior note which he put in his voice. "More men have ruined their lives by early marriages than by any other cause," he went on with even more superiority in his voice.

"Eh?" Doctor Minor swung around and looked at him. "Well, I don't know as I should go quite as far as that. Just as many men have been ruined by living for themselves. It all depends on what you want life to give you and whether you are willing to pay the price asked for what you want. Harry Yates must have found a lot of happiness in his daughter. Perhaps she was worth more to him than a national reputation. I must ask Mrs. Minor to come and see her."

It was that same evening that Nancy slipped out of the hospital for the run around the grounds which she always took after dinner, just as she took her coffee. It made her evening's study easier. She just had to have what her father had called "a lung full of fresh air" at least once a day. And she liked to get away from every one for a few minutes to review what had happened in the last twenty-four hours, to laugh over what this patient had done, to feel sorry for that patient, and to be impatient over a third. There were so many things that happened every twenty-four hours that the procession had to move at double quick to pass the reviewing stand in a few minutes.

It was a perfect evening in early June. Every

cloud in the sky had slipped into a pink or a mauve gown to attend the farewell party which the sun was giving in the west, and when she had her "lung full of fresh air" Nancy could not go back to her books. She followed the path which led her in and out of a tangle of lilacs whose belated blossoms ran through the color card from deepest purple to palest lavender and made the air heavy with their fragrance. She was thinking of Agnes Morissey and her lame back and of Jennie Green and her bad head and of Mrs. Levinski and her thirteen children and of the Duchess, who had nothing but money. She laughed as she remembered the visit the baker's dozen of children had made to their mother that afternoon, how solemnly they had marched into the ward. It had seemed as if the parade would never end. Jennie Green had forgotten her head and had sat up in bed to stare and exclaim, "My Gawd!" The Duchess had had no visitors. She had gone home alone that afternoon in a big limousine, her temper restored, and ready for another business scheme which she had planned in the peace and quiet of Room Thirteen. It would be as bad to have no one as to have a baker's dozen of children, Nancy told Nancy Yates. There must be a happy medium somewhere.

She was thinking of the happy medium, wondering if it would be six or if it would be seven, when she came to the end of the blossoming lilacs and found herself face to face with Rolf Jensen, who was out for a walk with his pipe. Nancy stopped and frowned.

"This is the second time you have all but stepped on me," she exclaimed somewhat irritably. "Why can't you look where you are going?" She put all of the blame for the collision on his square shoulders.

He laughed. He was not wearing his black frown as he sauntered in the afterglow, but had donned a very attractive smile. He looked as pleasant and as care-free as a young man of twenty-seven should look at that very delightful moment when the world is speeding day and welcoming night.

"Hello! What are you doing here?" You would have thought that he was an Irishman instead of a Dane, for it is the Irishman who is credited with the ability to respond to one question with another.

When Nancy had told him that she had come out for "a lung full of fresh air" he nodded his blond head approvingly and commended her like a grandfather.

"How do you like the old Hawk?" he asked, his eyes watching the slim fingers which were playing with the leaf which Nancy had filched from a pink honeysuckle. How white and soft the hands were! He remembered the rubber gloves and grinned.

"What kind of a man was old Geoffrey Williston Hawks? That big portrait in the reception room makes him look like a nut-cracker, but he must have had at least one generous impulse or he never would have endowed all this." And her glance went from the beautiful grounds to the big pile of brick and marble.

"He couldn't take it with him."

"No, that's true. God showed great wisdom when he refused to let us take any baggage on our last journey. Isn't it funny? People run around like ants trying to gather property which they will have to leave behind them. I'm not like that really. The only use I have for money is to spend it."

"You wouldn't take much joy in spending a dollar to-day unless you were sure there would be another dollar for to-morrow."

"No, I shouldn't." Nancy admitted it with reluctant honesty. "I should want to be able to shop to-morrow as well as to-day. Dear me, how dependent we are on the horrid stuff! We just have to have it even if it does make us like——"

"Miss Hawks," he suggested, as she hesitated to find a comparison to suit her.

"My poor Duchess. Do you like her?"

"I feel sorry for her." The answer was worthy of a diplomat at an international conference.

"I don't suppose it is ethics for a doctor to express his personal opinion in regard to a patient. You have yourself under splendid control, haven't you? Don't you ever want to let go?" She peered at him curiously as if she, at least, would like to see him let go and show her the result.

He shook his head. "It's better not to have likes and dislikes, then you don't have disappointments."

"But what a cowardly way to live! I'd rather be disappointed a hundred times than to be all shut up inside myself. Do you live in Waloo?" She found herself interested in this man who would not let him-

self like people for fear he would be disappointed in them, and she did not care if he did know that she was curious.

"Only since I came to college." And then he became most astonishingly confidential for Rolf Jensen. Perhaps it was the afterglow, perhaps it was the soft June night wind, perhaps it was Nancy Yates' pink-cheeked interest. "My grandfather came from Denmark, near Copenhagen, and he brought thirty Danish families with him to found a Danish colony. He had bought land for them in the northern part of the state. He used to be called the King of Little Denmark. You didn't know that I was royal, did you?" He smiled scornfully. "Poor old King Rolf. The land proved to be cut over timber claims and it didn't turn out good for farming. The Danes were dissatisfied and blamed grandfather. He was too honest for his own good, for he took back the land and reimbursed the colonists out of his own pocket. Soon grandfather was left without any money, without any subjects, without anything but a stretch of bleak land, good, every one said, for nothing. When grandfather died my father was glad to sell the land for enough to cover the mortgage, and two years later," he paused and looked at her so that she would not miss a word of what he was going to say, "iron ore was found on that worthless land. You know what iron ore is?" Nancy nodded. "That land which grandfather and all of his tribe and father, too, declared was ab-

that worthless land. You know what iron ore is?" Nancy nodded. That land which grandfather and all his tribe and father, too, declared was absolutely worthless is now producing several hundred thousand dollars a year in ore royalties."

"My goodness gracious!" gasped Nancy, and her eyes were far larger than any saucer in the hospital pantry. "And your father only got enough to pay off the mortgage?" She could not believe that that was all his father had received.

"That was practically all."

"But that wasn't fair! It wasn't just!" Her voice shook and her heart actually thumped at the injustice of it.

"It's what happened. If father had known anything about ore he would have found it, for the iron was discovered clinging to the roots of an old tree which had been uprooted not fifty rods back of the house. It was there in plain sight. Father had his chance, you see, and he didn't know it. You can't blame old Opportunity for a man's ignorance. Of course I'm sorry. It all happened when I was working my way through college, and for a while it made an anarchist, an I. W. W., out of me. I was ready to blow up the whole works. But after all a rich man's son loses a lot. When you come right down to brass tacks a man's dreams are of money and power. And if a chap is given those what has he to work for?"

"There's love!" suggested Nancy impulsively, and the words had not passed her lips before she blushed,

for she realized that he would not consider love as any addition to the list of things that he thought a man would work for.

"For romantic girls," he said indulgently.

"I wonder if there are any romantic girls left in the world, or if they all disappeared during the war? Most of the girls I know have exchanged romance for a practical business outlook. They aren't going to be swept off their feet by any emotion. I should say not! They know what they want, and they are going to get it."

"Oh, are they!" jeered Rolf Jensen.

Nancy was too interested in his story to catch fire at his sneer. She drew a deep breath. "I don't wonder you are an anarchist!" she exclaimed. "I'd be an I. W. W., too, if that had happened to my father!"

"I'm not an I. W. W. now. I don't know whether I am even a socialist now. I'm not such a fool as to think that the wealth of the world should be divided among the people. That's pure drivel and would only result in a new set of bosses. But I do think that the amount of money a man can make should be limited. Ten or fifteen millions should be enough for any man."

"They would be quite enough for this woman," dimpled Nancy.

"I don't know just how it could be managed," Rolf went on thoughtfully. "But I'd like to have every man who has made his ten millions stop working for himself and work for his country. Think of

the hospitals we could build, the playgrounds we could have, the research work we could do, the wide streets, the splendid living conditions we could have for every one! Some men are born with the ability to make money, and so I think they should make it for the nation after they have provided for their families."

"So do I," agreed Nancy, but before she could say anything more, he went on slowly:

"The war set me back three years, it caught me in my junior medic', but I suppose those years will turn out to be the biggest in my life. I learned a lot in France, more than I could have learned in any medical school in the country. I even traded my old revolutionary ideas for a nice new sense of brotherhood. No, I'm not an uplifter. If I'm anything I'm a leveler. There are too many high spots as well as low places. What this old world needs is a more level point of view for we'll always have rich cousins as well as poor brothers."

"The rich cousins interest me a lot more than the poor brothers. You can do so much more with riches than you can with poverty." And she sighed because poverty is not legal tender in any shop in the world.

"That depends on what you wish to buy. If you had been in France——But that's an old story!" And he would not tell her what would have happened if she had been in France.

"You sound awfully Utopian and far away," she exclaimed discontentedly. "And I can't wait. I

am an impatient creature, and I have to have what I want to-day. I may not be here to-morrow." She drew herself up and looked at him defiantly. "I am not going to be a nurse all of my life. You'd better believe I'm not! I'm going to have a share, a mighty big share, too, in the good things of this world!"

"You would never make money." He was amused that she should think she could. "You're too soft."

"A clever girl doesn't have to make money. There are other ways to acquire a fortune."

He looked at her in surprise. "Surely you aren't one of those empty-headed simpletons who thinks she will find a husband in a rich patient?" He could not believe that she was that empty-headed.

"Well," Nancy tried to keep her dimples in order, "a girl must have something pleasant to think of when she is polishing faucets, and a millionaire in the future is a very cheerful object to contemplate. You have to think of something besides work and wages when you are a working girl."

He stared at her as if he just could not believe that Nancy Yates was the simpleton she sounded. He put his doubt in words. "You look as if you were ordinarily intelligent," he said slowly, "and you act at times as if you were extraordinarily intelligent; but really—Why, Doctor Minor said only yesterday that you were going to make a corking nurse!"

"I have to be a good nurse," Nancy was demure as a kitten, "or Miss Bidnell will put some other girl

n the case when the rich old patient comes to the ospital. Oh, Doctor Jensen, I do wish you could :e yourself!" She broke into a peal of laughter. You look as if you were smelling all the bad smells ı the world, and tasting all the bad tastes, and see- ıg all the bad sights, and hearing all the bad sounds. suppose you are disgusted with me. You certainly ɔok it. But I don't care. I'm not going to sail nder false colors. That is my one best point. 'eople know me for exactly what I am."

"I wonder?" Rolf Jensen said slowly, and he hook his head, but he looked at her with curious in- :rest. "The little liar," he thought. "Rich pa- ent? Huh! She knows by this time that there isn't ny romance in a hospital. I bet she's got the up- ft bug and is ashamed to admit it." So he ughed indulgently and said kindly, as a super-in- :lligent man would speak to a foolish but ambitious ıild, "When you find your victim let me know. erhaps I can lend a hand."

At that Nancy shook her head. "I can't run any ıks by taking a partner or a confederate," she ıuckled. Nancy was enjoying herself hugely. It as fun to shock this rather serious young interne ıd make him realize that she was not like the other ɔrty-nine nurses in the hospital, that she could hold ıst to her personality even if she did wear a white pron and a probationer's blue gingham. "I shall ıve to work alone!" And she stopped chuckling ı sigh as if her task would be long and hard.

"We should do well together," he insisted eagerly,

for he was man enough to wish to do what he was told he could not do. "I feel the possibilities of a good second-story man in me this minute."

Together? Some peg in her memory had an association with that word hanging on it. Why, Uncle Ben had said that it was the biggest word in the dictionary. But Nancy Yates did not agree with him, and she giggled.

"I couldn't trust you. Much better start on a raid of your own. Princess Moneybags is sure to come here some day and you can make her your prisoner. Is it a bargain?" she laughed. "You may have the princess and I shall take the prince, and we'll both be rich and cozy for ever and ever."

He laughed, too. A man could not help but laugh when Nancy Yates stood before him with her eyes sparkling, her cheeks pink, her dimples flashing. Nancy did more than laugh. She made a cup of her two hands and lifted it high as if about to drink a toast.

"Here's to good hunting!" she cried in her soft voice. "All the Moneybags had better seek cover. My goodness gracious!" she exclaimed, as the clock in the tower of the Presbyterian Church two blocks away interrupted her to say that it was nine o'clock. "I hadn't any idea it was that late!" She turned toward the hospital which now seemed all windows, glaring disapproval.

He fell into step beside her, but she was in too much haste for any more conversation. She never said a word until they had entered the door and were

met by Miss Bidnell. Nancy stopped short. Miss Bidnell seemed to be trying to make her feel guilty. Her sharp black eyes declared that Nancy had committed some misdemeanor. What was it? In a flash she remembered. Honest confession was all she had to offer to Miss Bidnell's accusing eyes.

"Oh, Miss Bidnell," the words came in a rush. "I've broken a rule! I've been in the garden talking to an interne!"

"The interne has been talking to the nurse, Miss Bidnell." Rolf Jensen made a quick correction of the impulsive statement. "It was entirely my fault. I kept Miss Yates."

Miss Bidnell looked from starry-eyed Miss Yates to red-faced Doctor Jensen, and her face lost some of its sternness.

"So long as you have admitted your fault I shall say nothing this time," she said graciously, but there was an unmistakable emphasis on the next to the last word of the sentence.

VI

DOCTOR MINOR remembered to send his wife to call on the daughter of his old friend, and Mrs. Minor did her duty and invited Nancy to dine with them. Nancy had almost forgotten that there was any world but that of the hospital, and she read the cordial little note with a thrill of real pleasure.

"Hurrah and three cheers!" she exclaimed. "I shan't have to eat Hamburg steak and tapioca pudding this week. I'm going to have a real dinner." And then she frowned at the sober second thought which always follows the joyous first thought when one receives an invitation. "But what on earth shall I wear? I can't go in this blue gingham, and no one but the maid will wear a white apron!"

"There is my white georgette," suggested Dollie Maybie. "It will fit you like a dream for we are both perfect thirty-four. And you can borrow Gladys' coat. It will make a very good substitute for an evening coat."

"Take my white silk stockings, the pair with the open work clocks which Mrs. Blunt gave me after I nursed her through pneumonia," offered Mary Farley. "They are about the swellest thing ever made in socks. I never expect to have another pair equal to them."

Nancy looked at them, and gratitude brimmed

over in her eyes and in her voice. "You generous ducks! But I can't borrow your pretties."

"Why can't you?" demanded Dollie. "If I were going to dine with 'Uncle Alec' you would loan me your string of gold beads, wouldn't you?"

"I certainly should, but I hope you'd wear something else," giggled Nancy.

"Well, then!" triumphantly. "What's the difference? Singly we might not make much of a sartorial dent, but together I rather think we can turn out one perfect lady."

Nancy shrugged her shoulders impatiently. Together! How that word irritated her. It did seem as if she should be able to go out to dine by herself without making it any "together" proposition. But even if she dined alone there would be the people who cooked and served for her, and if she cooked her own dinner there would be the people who raised the chickens and grew the potatoes. She stopped shrugging her shoulders and sighed. It did seem so foolish that Uncle Ben should be right and that life had to be an affair of "together" whether she wanted it to be or not.

So Nancy and Dollie's white georgette and Mary's silk stockings and Julia Nelson's satin camisole went to the Minors on Hamburg steak and tapioca night, and, as Dollie prophesied, the combination was most satisfactory.

"You're not pretty, you know, Nancy," she said critically, "but you have a way with you, and you look like a love!"

There were three other guests in the pleasant living room, and Nancy smiled demurely as she was introduced to Miss Kitty Marrison and to young Daniel Darvin. She opened her eyes rather wide when she recognized the man who was sitting beside Miss Marrison. She had never seen Rolf Jensen in anything but his white hospital suit, she had never thought of him as anything but a white tower, but he looked very well when he was dressed as other men, she told Nancy Yates swiftly as she gave him a slim little hand.

Dan Darvin proved to be Mrs. Minor's nephew, and his round face and hearty voice expressed the greatest pleasure at meeting Nancy Yates and Dollie's white georgette. In two minutes they were seated at the charmingly appointed table in the dining room. Nancy glanced at her hostess over the gay centerpiece of Iceland poppies which offered every shade of yellow from the palest tint to the darkest hue.

"You have no idea how lovely this is, Mrs. Minor!" she exclaimed happily. "We have a very pleasant dining room at the hospital. It is bright and sunny and clean, all that one could expect in a nurses' home, but it isn't really homey, you know. After you have once had a home of your own I don't suppose you ever get over missing it and wanting it again."

There was so much real appreciation in her voice and in her face that Mrs. Minor made a mental note to ask her often. Of course she did not do it, for

she had a large circle of friends, and Nancy at the hospital was Nancy out of sight and consequently out of mind. It is so much easier to make a plan than it is to carry one out.

But Nancy was too occupied in enjoying this dinner to think about other dinners. She was so interested in her work that she thought other people would be interested in it, too, and before she knew it she was chattering about the peacock patient who had come to the hospital with a trunk full of lace and embroidered bedspreads and as many embroidered sheets and pillow-cases, bed-gowns and caps and negligee so that she might have a different color scheme every day. And there was the brown bear who had been coaxed to stop growling long enough to buy ice cream to stop the mouths of the dozen complaining women in a ward and then had wanted to eat all of the refreshments for his party himself. She told them of the cormorant who was always hungry and who tried, with the promise of the prettiest hat in Waloo, to bribe the nurses to bring him corn fritters and strawberry shortcake, and of the monkey whose delight it was to hide things until his bed was a cache for the nurse to hunt through. For a wonder she said nothing that she should not have said, for it is, indeed, true that the tongue is an unruly member, and Nancy's tongue was no better behaved than your tongue or mine. Her stories were funny, and she told them well, showing a keen observation and a strong sense of

humor as well as sympathy. Dan Darvin laughed heartily.

"I shouldn't mind being ill if I could be sure you would take care of me!" he exclaimed. "What is the easiest and pleasantest disease a fellow can have, 'Uncle Alec'?"

"What a lot of shop I have been talking!" Nancy looked apologetically at Mrs. Minor. "I am such a self-centered idiot that I think every one is interested in what interests me. You know there is nothing in the world quite so amazing to me as myself," she went on confidentially. "It is so wonderful to think that there really is a Nancy Yates, that she actually breathes and talks and laughs and can eat these delicious things! I just can't get over the wonder of it! And I want to snatch a share of every good thing that there is in the world for Nancy Yates. I never want her to be sorry that she is I!"

"By George!" exclaimed Dan in quick admiration of her wild rose cheeks and her bright eyes, "I don't believe she ever will be! I am willing to wager that she is thundering glad!"

"How could she be any one else?" Kitty Marrison turned to Rolf Jensen to ask curiously. Kitty had been regarding Nancy with eyes full of astonishment. She had known many graduate nurses, but she had never known a student nurse, and if Nancy was a fair sample of a student nurse Kitty thought that the training must be terribly severe to produce the results which she had known as graduate nurses.

Rolf laughed gently. He had been regarding Nancy, too, and there was something besides astonishment in his eyes. He looked at Kitty now and thought that no two girls could be more different than Kitty Marrison and Nancy Yates.

"She couldn't!" he told Kitty with considerable emphasis on the pronoun. "She couldn't be anything but Nancy Yates. That is why it is so important for her to be good to Nancy Yates. We all want to be good to ourselves, don't we?"

"It is just a form of self-preservation," laughed Doctor Minor as he pushed back his chair. "One of the strongest forces in the world. Come, Nancy, and let me show you my books." For Doctor Minor had a hobby as well as a profession, and his library was a beautiful and soul-disturbing place. It was the easiest thing in the world to break the tenth commandment when you were in Doctor Minor's library.

While Nancy looked at first editions and showed a really intelligent interest in bindings, although Dan Darvin lounged at her elbow with irreverent comments, she could look through the wide doorway and see Rolf Jensen talking so contentedly to Kitty Marrison.

"Is Miss Marrison rich?" she asked, suddenly interrupting Doctor Minor's story of how, when and where he had found the first edition of *Gulliver's Travels*.

"Sure she is," Dan answered for his uncle. "At least her old man is. Old Reuben Marr[illegible]

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one fortune out of Minnesota timber and then he made another fortune out of Minnesota iron ore."

Iron ore! Nancy had heard of iron ore before, and her eyes widened. How wonderful it would be if Kitty Marrison should prove to be Rolf Jensen's princess. Kitty seemed to be hanging on his words now, she told Nancy Yates as she peeped through the doorway. It would be only fair for Fate to give Rolf iron ore in place of the iron ore which had been taken from his father. Nancy seemed to see Justice and Romance standing beside Rolf and Kitty as they talked together, and she sighed well pleased.

"It's perfectly wonderful!" she exclaimed.

And Doctor Minor, who thought that copy of *Gulliver's Travels,* still in its original overcoat, was a treasure, agreed with her.

It was so wonderfully romantic that Nancy was disappointed when at last she left the fascinating library to find that Mrs. Minor was alone in the living room.

"Doctor Jensen and Kitty went away together," Mrs. Minor explained.

"Oh!" exclaimed Nancy flatly. The moment she had seen Rolf Jensen in the Minor living room she had thought what a jolly walk they would have to the hospital under the August moon. It was rather disconcerting to hear that her partner had gone away with another girl. She would have been cross if the girl had been any one but Kitty Marrison.

It was Doctor Minor who took Nancy home in spite of Dan's efforts to circumvent him.

"I have to go to the hospital, and I'll run you over myself," the Doctor insisted.

"Oh, very well," murmured Dan. "But you can't break up our friendship by any such Bolshevik methods, can he, Miss Yates? I'll see you soon again."

"I wonder where?" Nancy smiled impishly. "I hope not in the operating room. Good-night, Mrs. Minor. You have given me a wonderful time. It was dear of you to ask me."

"She'll ask you again," promised Dan. "She'll ask both of us, won't you, Aunt Ethel? Don't fill all of your time, Miss Yates. Keep a night free," he begged.

Nancy laughed at him as she ran down the steps to the waiting car. She and Doctor Minor had a wonderful talk about people and responsibilities as they drove to the hospital. Doctor Minor was really interested in Harry Yates' daughter, and he wanted to help her. He was as pleased as she was that her probation period was over and that Miss Bidnell had declared her worthy of the uniform of a student nurse, cap, apron and gown. Nancy was obsessed with that cap. She had to stop every time she went near a mirror and look at it.

"You have a pleasant, kind face," she told the girl who looked back at her one day. "That is about all a true friend could say. But your cap is certainly a duck!"

She turned away from the mirror to find herself face to face with the sternest doctor on the staff and with the most unreasonable doctor. They had caught her staring at herself like a silly peacock. She turned crimson and would gladly have given her left dimple if she could have been immediately transported to the laboratory where she belonged, but as that was impossible she made the best of a foolish situation.

"This cap scares me to death," she confided to them with a childlike smile which hid a grown-up quake. "I'm always afraid that it is going to drop on my patient's face. You should thank your lucky stars that Miss Bidnell doesn't make you wear one."

"You know you never expected to fail," Doctor Minor said now, when she told him how relieved she was that the hospital had not turned her away without a chance to wear the bit of lawn on her red head.

Nancy looked mysterious, as if there were things in the life of a probationer of which a doctor knew nothing. "You never can tell. I haven't taken kindly to discipline. Ask Miss Bidnell. But I haven't been as bad as Lydia Peterson. Did you know that Lydia wants the nurses to form a union? I told her if she did I'd form another union for the patients and one for the doctors, too. They have some rights. I'm not going to have my future ruined for any whims of Lydia Peterson. I know what I want, and I'm going to get it!"

"What do you want?" Doctor Minor was curi-

ous to know whether Nancy wished to specialize as a surgical nurse or grow into a hospital superintendent.

"Money," she told him with a frank chuckle. "Heaps and heaps of money to buy pretties for Nancy Yates. I don't want a cent to make life more comfortable for other people," she added scornfully. "I don't care a whoop for other people!"

"Of course you don't." And he laughed softly. "You don't go up to North Waldo one afternoon a week to teach Mrs. Levinski English so that her children won't be ashamed of her. And you weren't responsible for your brown bear's party. Oh, no! I heard the truth about that festivity, that the ward was bluer than indigo, and the brown bear worse than that. A certain nurse was at her wits' end until she thought of a party for the ward. She was going to give it herself but it occurred to her that she might interest the brown bear in it. Oh, no, you don't care a whoop for people!" And he looked at her with kindly eyes.

"Dear me, what tattletales there are in a hospital!" Nancy wriggled and blushed. "But I guess you would go and teach Mrs. Levinski English yourself if you had heard that detestable oldest son of hers tell me that the poor old mother stood in his way because she couldn't learn American ways. I'll show him!" She nodded her red head with a determination which would have convinced even ambitious Isadore Levinski, if he could have seen her.

"And who bought a gown for little Mrs. Bunts so that she wouldn't have to wear the ugly hospital one when her husband came to see her?" went on the Doctor, who seemed to have a long list of things which had been done by some one.

Nancy flushed guiltily. "Those old hospital gowns are frights. If I were going to be a hospital superintendent I should design a smart new model. But as I'm not I bought a ready-made gown. And as for that party—— Of course it was cheaper for me to persuade the brown bear to be the host. You'd never believe how much he enjoyed it. You know very well that I am paid only ten dollars a month. You can't entertain very lavishly nor very often on ten dollars a month!"

Doctor Minor shook his head and took one of his hands from the wheel to put it on Nancy's bare fingers. "Just between ourselves," he said confidentially, "you might as well admit what I know, and what you know, that a certain nurse is neither as yellow nor as green as you seem to wish to paint her."

"Well," Nancy chuckled happily, "I am not going to have people say I am prejudiced in her favor. I have had a very pleasant evening, Doctor Minor," she added more formally. "And you don't know how happy I am to know that you loved my father. If you hadn't known him and loved him you never would be so perfectly grand to his daughter!" she exclaimed gratefully.

VII

UNCLE BEN was in Waloo. He called Nancy to the telephone to tell her that he was in town, and to ask her if he might come out to the hospital and take a look at that prince of hers and see if the fellow was half good enough for an impudent baggage named Nancy Yates.

Nancy almost wept. It was so good to hear Uncle Ben's hearty voice after all those months.

"Uncle Ben! You old darling! Stay exactly where you are, for I'm coming right down! Isn't it lucky this is my afternoon off? We can have a grand old talk and you can buy me a real dinner!"

She met Uncle Ben in the Waloo Hotel and with him was—of all people!—George Yardley, who had come up for a banker's convention, and who must have made a mistake about the place of meeting, for according to his own story he had been sitting on the steps of the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital waiting for Nancy Yates.

"Until a tall chap with a yellow wig and white clothes——"

"Doctor Jensen!" suggested Nancy all pink and teary with joy at the unexpected meeting with Uncle Ben and George.

"Like a street sweeper," George winked at Uncle Ben, "told me you wouldn't be back for hours. He

seemed glad to shoo me off the steps. But I got a good whiff of the place first. Great Godfrey, Nance, how do you stand it?"

"It's a good, clean, healthy smell," insisted Nancy. "And you'd like it if you lived with it. But don't talk about me, talk about Mifflin. I'm crazy to know how Aunt Alice is? And Doris? Sometimes it seems as if Mifflin were on the other side of the world, right next door to Pekin or Shanghai, it seems so far away."

"You can come back any day you say," George exclaimed eagerly. "You can't come a minute too soon to please me." And his eyes gave her a more cordial invitation even than his voice.

"I'm not a quitter." Nancy would not let him see how homesick the hungry light in his eyes, the hungry note in his voice made her feel. "I came to Waloo to seek my fortune, and I'm not going back until I find it."

"Still harping on the same string, Nance!" Uncle Ben regarded her from over his big bone spectacles. "Just to save argument suppose we go to a show. I hear there is a good musical comedy at the Waloo Theater, and my train doesn't go until midnight."

In the crowd which surged into the theater Nancy found herself beside Rolf Jensen and Kitty Marrison. They smiled and nodded to her, and she smiled and nodded back although she was surprised.

"He isn't wasting any time," she told Nancy

Yates. "Evidently he knows who she is as well as I do. What did you say, George?"

"I said there is the yellow-wigged chap I saw at the hospital." And George nodded toward Rolf Jensen.

The musical comedy was good, and, sitting between Uncle Ben and George, Nancy enjoyed every minute of it. Rolf Jensen and Kitty Marrison were just in front of them and Nancy could see that they were enjoying it, too. How romantic it was. And how clever Rolf Jensen was to recognize his princess at once. But glad as Nancy was that Rolf Jensen was so clever, for some reason she sighed.

When Uncle Ben would have sent her home with George she clung to his sleeve and begged him to go with them. She did not wish to be left alone with George. She detected signs of a revolt in George, and she did not want to tell him again that in her estimation a man could not support a wife on a hundred dollars. Even in little Mifflin a hundred dollars a month was not anywhere near half enough.

As they waited on the corner Nancy saw Rolf Jensen follow Kitty Marrison into the Marrison limousine which drew up to the curb, and she sighed again as she stepped into a long, yellow street car. A limousine was sure to be far more comfortable than a street car. She loathed crowded yellow street cars.

The car was so crowded that there was no opportunity for conversation, and the hour was so late

that Nancy could not linger at the hospital steps. George sniffed at the odor which came through the open door. He was not at all satisfied with the end of the evening, and the smell of the hospital was one thing with which he dared to find fault.

"I don't see how you stand it!"

Doris said the same thing when she came up for a few days' shopping and sniffed the clean, acrid odor with delicate nostrils.

"I should think you'd hate it!"

"What's the matter with it?" Nancy sniffed, too. "It's clean and it's sanitary. What more do you want?"

"Oh, Nance!" Doris shuddered. "Honestly, I don't see how you stand it! It's—it's depressing to think of so much suffering and disease under one roof. Doesn't it depress you?" Doris did not see how it could fail to depress every one.

"It isn't depressing. It's stimulating. You would never believe, Doris, how much I know already," Nancy told her eagerly. "Nursing isn't just giving baths and carrying trays and taking temperatures. I should say not! Why we study anatomy and physiology and bacteriology and," proudly, "materia medica! I love bacteriology, and Doctor Minor says I have a gift for it. Perhaps I'll specialize in bacteriology and set up a laboratory of my own. Bugs are mighty interesting."

"Ugh!" Doris shuddered more violently. "I should hate them. And I should hate the patients. You can't like them!"

But Nancy could, and the patients liked her. It was like a game to work with them, to coax them into a good humor or to make them forget their pains and their jealousies. Nancy was a fair judge of character. It was she who discovered that gray little Miss Wangs, who whimpered all day, was a grandmother at heart, although she never knew it until Nancy brought her a ball of wool and four knitting needles and told her that the seven Melusky children had not a pair of whole stockings among them. Nancy showed old Mr. White how to invent new games of solitaire for himself and persuaded talkative Mrs. Hawes to write her reminiscences instead of voicing them.

"Poor old souls!" she said, when Lydia complained of their complaints. "I love to do things for them, especially when their relatives come to call. It makes them feel so important to order me about and makes such an impression on the relatives. It's fun! But the private cases make me tired. It's too bad I feel that way when I have to find my fortune in Rich Man's Alley. But you can't make any impression on the private cases. They are used to attention. Look at my old Duchess!"

For the Duchess' last business scheme was not working out at all as the Duchess had planned. It made her so furious that she had returned to Room Thirteen to study it, and she snapped and snarled and threatened to bite any one who came near her. Nancy was glad that she was not the Duchess' nurse. She would rather take care of old Mrs. Melusky

even if there was absolutely no chance of meeting a prince in a ward.

She came into the big sunny room one morning to find one of the patients, a young woman, half delirious and moaning piteously for Jim to give her a rose.

"Give me a rose, Jim. Give me a rose. I want Jim to give me a rose!" The words were repeated again and again in the thin broken voice.

"She's been that way for hours," explained Mary Farley, whom Nancy relieved. "Too bad, isn't it? Nothing seems to quiet her."

"Have you tried giving her a rose?" Nancy caught the fluttering hands and held them between her cool palms.

"No, I haven't. I didn't have one. And anyway she wants Jim to give it to her."

"Much she would know who gave it to her," scornfully. "Just wait a minute!"

There were plenty of flowers even in the ward, but there were no roses. There were only garden flowers. But possibly there was a rose in one of the private rooms. Nancy ran out to ask the corridor nurses. They shook their heads. No one sends roses to a hospital in summer when garden flowers are so much more beautiful.

"I don't know of a rose anywhere," frowned Miss Haley. "Yes, I do, too. Miss Hawks has her usual bunch."

"The Duchess?" A minute later and Nancy had

stammered her little story to the Duchess, who listened because she could not help but listen.

"I don't believe in pampering poor people," she said coldly, when Nancy had finished, and she turned a page in her book.

Nancy gasped. How could any one be so selfish? "But just giving a rose to a sick woman isn't pampering the poor. I should think you could spare one." And she looked at the enormous cluster of pink roses which was on the table. "You will have a fresh bunch to-day," she suggested.

"I don't believe in pampering poor people," repeated the Duchess stubbornly.

And then Nancy forgot the most important of all the hospital rules. Perhaps if the Duchess had really been ill she might have remembered it, although I don't know. She walked across the room to stand beside the Duchess and look down at her with eyes which fairly blazed.

"I think you are the most selfish woman in the world! And the meanest woman!" she began in a voice which was so full of disgust and anger that it would not stay steady. "I should think you would hate yourself to be so mean and so selfish!" She had to stop then because her voice refused to express just how angry and disgusted she was. But Walter Savage Landor was undoubtedly right when he remarked that more can be said in a minute than can be forgotten in a lifetime.

It was not the way for a nurse to speak to a patient, even if the patient was convalescing only

from a bad investment, and Nancy knew it the second the words had hurled themselves across her lips. But she did not care. She would have died if she had not told the Duchess how selfish and mean she was. She did not wait to hear what the Duchess said but dashed out of the room. Miss Bidnell was in the corridor. Nancy ran to her and tore the little white cap she had worn so proudly from her head.

"Here," she stammered. "I'll have to resign! I've broken the rules! I've been impudent to a patient. Only I haven't! I've just told a patient the truth!"

VIII

A ROSE had disappeared from the bunch which was sent every week to Miss Myrtice Hawks when she was in the hospital. Instead of twelve beautiful pink blossoms there were only eleven. Dear me, there was a bother! Miss Hawks ordered a nurse to telephone to the florist to ask if only eleven roses had been sent to her, and when he insisted that he himself had put twelve in the box, she demanded Nancy Yates.

Nancy was in the ward bending over a white-faced young woman, whose eyes shone with happiness as she clung to a great pink rose and stammered its story to the nurse.

"Jim always brought me a rose when we quarreled, as young folks sometimes do. It was to show that everything was all right between us again, and so when I remembered that we had quarreled just before I was brought here I kept asking him to give me the rose so that I'd know that everything was all right, and he wasn't mad any more. I suppose I must have disturbed the other patients, but I couldn't help it. I should have died if I hadn't found that rose on my pillow. It told me Jim wasn't mad at me any longer, and so I'm going to get well right away." And she smiled weakly and tearfully at Nancy.

"Of course you are. And you aren't going to quarrel with Jim any more." Nancy sounded as if she were her own grandmother, all white hair and spectacles. "It's such a waste of time, and it spoils your good looks. I read somewhere that a woman could only keep her beauty as long as she kept her temper. And we women just have to keep what beauty we have, don't we?"

And just then Miss Morse came in with a message.

"Miss Hawks wants to see you at once, Miss Yates," she said formally, and her quick eye did not miss the big pink rose in Mrs. Jim's thin fingers. It matched the roses in Miss Hawks' room perfectly. Miss Morse was sorry for Nancy Yates.

"Oh, dear, what does she want?" Nancy believed that it was her privilege to question why. She did not believe in doing and dying until she did know why.

"She'll tell you." And Miss Morse went away quickly so that she could not be teased into telling.

"I'm glad she isn't taking care of me," whispered Mrs. Jim, and she squeezed Nancy's hand. "I'd rather have you."

"Tut, tut," smiled Nancy. "She is a graduate nurse, and she knows things that I never heard of."

"I guess it doesn't matter so much what you know as how you let folks feel what you know," murmured Mrs. Jim. "Will you 'phone Jim for me, nurse?"

"Miss Yates," corrected Nancy. "I'm not going

to let Nancy Yates be lost in any nurse. What shall I tell Jim?"

"Tell him I never was so glad to get anything in my life as I was to get his rose, and I want to see him just as soon as he can come. Tell him I'm awfully sorry I was such a fool, and as soon as we are together again he'll see that I'm sorry."

"I'll tell him. That's a great word, 'together,' isn't it?" And she smiled a little scornfully at her patient, who looked like a child as she lay in the narrow hospital bed.

"It's the most wonderful word that ever was! You'd know, nurse,—I mean Miss Yates,—if you had a man like my Jim. I was a fool to act as I did. Together with Jim! There isn't any word sounds more splendid to me. You'll tell him?" wistfully.

"Sure," Nancy promised, and she patted the colorless cheek before she went away to tell Jim that and something else, something which Mrs. Jim had not told her to tell Jim.

Five minutes later she stood beside Miss Hawks, who sat in a big chair looking more like a duchess than ever in a purple velvet dressing gown, and who stared accusingly at Nancy.

"I never!" exclaimed Nancy when the Duchess had asked her in the very plainest kind of words if she had taken one of her roses. "How dare you?" Her face flamed because the Duchess had dared. She hated the Duchess.

"You came in here and asked for a rose," the

Duchess went on in a very cold contemptuous sort of a voice. "You talked to me in a most unwarranted manner because I didn't give you one. And now I find that one of the flowers is missing. The florist sent twelve. He told Miss Morse that he did, and there are only eleven there. Count them yourself. I don't know of any one but you who wanted a rose, so naturally I thought of you at once." Her gray eyes,—and no eyes can be quite as icy as gray eyes,—looked at Nancy.

If Nancy had not been so warm-blooded she would have been chilled to the bone, but Nancy was too indignant to be chilled.

"I never heard of anything so outrageous in my life!" She was so indignant that her voice shook. "I wonder what kind of a woman you are to accuse innocent people of stealing! What——"

And just then the door opened, and there stood Doctor Minor and Rolf Jensen. There was something out of the usual routine in the indignant nurse with her flaming face, her flashing eyes, standing beside the patient, whose face was coldly contemptuous, her eyes scornful, and Doctor Minor was quick to see the unusual. It was a symptom, and symptoms were his daily bread and meat.

"Good-morning, everybody," he began cheerily, quite as if everything was as usual, but as the Duchess refused to say good-morning to him, and as Nancy Yates just stood there, a splendid picture of angered innocence, instead of effacing herself as she had been told to do when a doctor entered a pa-

tient's room, he began all over again. "What's the matter?" It was as plain as print that something was the matter.

Nancy shut her red lips tight together. She would not tell, not if they cut her into inch pieces. Doctor Minor was not a man to be defied, and whether she wanted to or not, the Duchess had to explain that she had accused Nancy Yates of stealing one of her roses. It sounded like an awful accusation for a little thing, and a purple flush, which almost matched her velvet gown, stained her cheeks, and she finished with a stammer.

"The rose doesn't amount to anything in itself, but a nurse who would take a rose—One can't overlook such tendencies."

But that was more than Nancy could stand.

"Miss Hawks!" she exclaimed, and stopped because the lump in her throat was so large that it choked her. What a hateful, hateful woman Miss Hawks was!

"Miss Yates didn't steal your rose!" Rolf Jensen burst forth indignantly. "I saw the whole thing, but I never imagined that it would make trouble for any one. Miss Morse was carrying your flowerse down the corridor and they brushed against the orderly. One of the roses broke off and fell to the floor. Just then Miss Yates came along. She was frowning and looked bothered. When she saw the rose on the floor she snatched it up and stopped frowning. You looked awfully pleased," he told Nancy. "I couldn't imagine why you should be

so happy to find a rose on the floor. But picking up a flower from a corridor floor is not stealing a rose from a patient!" he told the Duchess in a way which dared her to contradict him.

The Duchess began to look more ashamed than contemptuous or scornful. But before she could speak Nancy Yates was explaining herself.

"She never gave me a chance to tell where I got the rose. She said I was a thief before I could explain. But if I hadn't found that flower in the corridor I should have come back here and stolen one. Yes, I should!" Nancy was too defiant to be really apologetic. "You would have done it, too," she told Doctor Minor, "if you had heard Mrs. Jim beg for a rose. And there wasn't another rose in this big hospital. I just had to have one at once. The rose was a symbol, you know," she was talking directly to Doctor Minor, her back was almost to the Duchess as she told her story. "It meant that Jim wasn't angry with his wife any longer. He always gave her a rose as a—a sign of peace. I don't suppose you," she turned her face to the Duchess, "know what it means to have some one you love angry with you! I don't suppose you really love any one!"

"Miss Yates!" Doctor Minor's exclamation reminded Nancy that a nurse must not "suppose" about a patient, but she did not care. She rushed on in her headlong fashion, while the Duchess stared at her as if she had never seen a red-headed student nurse before. Rolf Jensen stared too, and behind his

sober face he was chuckling joyously. He had been in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital for almost a year and he had never heard even a graduate nurse, much less a student nurse, speak to a patient as Nancy was speaking to the Duchess. Nancy's courage awoke his interest and his admiration.

"I don't believe that she is afraid of anything," he thought with wondering amazement. For it meant something for a student nurse to stand before the daughter of the founder of the hospital and express her mind.

"It was selfish!" Nancy insisted. "I never imagined any woman could be so cruelly selfish. If I had asked you for diamonds you couldn't have refused me any more sharply. I don't wonder people are anarchists and I. W. W.'s when the rich are so stingy and cruel. Yes, I know Miss Hawks can send for Miss Bidnell and have me dismissed for impudence, but I don't care. It was selfish and cruel! It was!" And then for some reason, it might have been the Duchess' face which had changed its severity for bewilderment, the defiance died out of Nancy's voice. "Perhaps I didn't make myself quite clear. Perhaps Miss Hawks didn't understand what I wanted. I'm so quick myself that I don't wait for slower people. My father tried to bring me up to share what I had with those who didn't have anything," she went on with an apology for her bringing up. "I'm trying to forget that, but I don't forget very well. How did you get to think of no one but yourself?" She put the

question directly to the Duchess, but she did not do it impudently, she really wanted to know. "I wish you would tell me. I know it would be a help. You seem to live in a glass case all by yourself. I wish you would tell me how you got inside of it away from people." She shrugged her shoulders, for instead of telling Nancy her method the Duchess had snorted indignantly. "But of course you won't tell me anything now. You're angry with me. Shall I send for Miss Bidnell? You will want to tell her your side of the story." And she walked over to the bed and took the bell in her hand.

"Not so fast! Not so fast!" protested Doctor Minor, and even the Duchess put out a restraining hand, while Rolf Jensen quietly took the bell from Nancy. "My word, but you are quick, Nancy. It's a very serious thing for a girl to be dismissed from a hospital training school for impudence to a patient," he said more to the Duchess than to Nancy, and he hesitated, wondering what further he could say that would impress Miss Hawks with the seriousness. It was not easy to talk to a woman with a temper which was as hot and as cold as Miss Hawks' temper.

"Yes, I should think it would be." The Duchess' voice was as dry as a bone. It promised the worst, and she looked from one to the other of the little group with cold contemptuous eyes which prepared them for prompt action. She smiled grimly, she knew what they thought as well as they did, and she found considerable satisfaction in taking the wind

completely out of Doctor Minor's ballooning sails and leaving them flapping in the calm by adding with cool unconcern: "But I don't know why we should discuss that. I don't know that a nurse has been any more impudent than a patient. I called Miss Yates a thief and she called me a stingy grouch. Doctor Jensen has explained that I was wrong. I expect," she went on with a very deep breath, "that I owe Miss Yates an apology. If you will overlook what I called you, Miss Yates"—the Duchess always paid her bills promptly—"I'll forget what you called me."

If all of the patients in the hospital, even those with broken legs, had jumped from their beds and danced down the corridor Nancy could not have been more surprised. Miss Myrtice Hawks, the Duchess, apologizing to her! She could not believe her two ears. Quick tears sprang to her eyes, and she caught the Duchess' long thin fingers in her hand.

"Indeed I shall, gladly. But I didn't say you were a grouch. I don't tell lies, except sometimes when it's necessary to soothe a patient. I said you were selfish and—and mean, but I didn't say you were a stingy grouch!"

"Perhaps you both said more than you meant," suggested Doctor Minor, beaming on them impartially. "Women are apt to." As if men never did.

But neither the Duchess nor Nancy paid any attention to him.

"Take all the roses," the Duchess was saying in

quite a ducal manner. "Yes, I mean it! I should rather some one else had them to-day."

Nancy looked at her quickly and saw that she meant what she said. "I've been a perfect fool," she exclaimed, as she gathered the flowers from the vase. "But I can't help it. It's the way I'm made. My patients will simply love these roses. I'll tell them," she said daringly, "that the Duchess sent them. And every time I look at them I'll remember that I'm not as good a judge of people as I thought I was." She smiled at them from above the armful of roses as she left the room.

There was silence for a full moment, and then Doctor Minor cleared his throat.

"She's a fine girl," he said, as if he defied either of the two who were left to contradict him. "Even if she is impulsive and quick-tempered."

"That's her youth!" The Duchess showed him that she had not forgotten how to snap. "And you and I would be glad to give our self-control," the Duchess evidently believed that she had self-control, "and our restraint for the ability to be impulsive again. There isn't any one who would remain old if he could be young. I like to see a girl high-spirited. Most of your nurses," she spoke of them contemptuously and snapped her fingers at him, "are like sheep. They do as they are told and mind Miss Bidnell. The next time I come here I must see more of Nancy Yates."

"You must?" Doctor Minor was surprised again. It was, as he so often said, quite impossible to tell

what a woman will do. He had thought that Miss Hawks would never wish to see Nancy Yates again.

"I must. She stimulates me. I believe I've got hold of the combination I was hunting for. It's good for brains and people to be jarred. Miss Yates would be good for any one, wouldn't she, Doctor Jensen?"

Doctor Jensen opened sleepy eyes and a hint of red stained his face. "I don't know," he stammered foolishly, wondering why on earth she put the question to him instead of to Doctor Minor.

"That's because you are as blind as a bat!" she told him sharply. "A man with any sight at all can see that Nancy Yates is alive and live people are good for the world. It's dead people who are in the way. Nancy Yates is worth a dozen of that Kitty Marrison I saw you with the other night," she said so bluntly that he jumped. "She's worth a hundred! Kitty Marrison is just—rich. I wonder why Nancy Yates called me Duchess!" She was surprising with her questions. "You heard her? Do you know?"

IX

WHEN Nancy Yates told Miss Myrtice Hawks that she was the meanest and most selfish woman in the world she climbed right over the chill reserve with which Miss Hawks had inclosed herself like barbed wire around a meadow, and was admitted to a certain odd friendship, for when Myrtice Hawks turned a new leaf she turned it completely over so that it quite covered the old page. Miss Hawks was also curious. She wanted to know why Nancy had called her Duchess. No one had ever raised her to the peerage before, and it pleased her in a strange fashion. When Nancy came to tell her how much the patients in the ward had loved the great bunch of pink roses, Miss Hawks wasted no time but went at once to the point she wished to reach.

"Why did you call me Duchess?"

"Did I?" Nancy's eyes opened wide. She did not remember just what she had called Miss Hawks when she had lost her temper and again when she had found her temper. "I suppose it was because I always think of you as a duchess," she explained quite truthfully. "You remember that first day when I brought you a glass of water?" Miss Hawks nodded, she could see again the flashing eyes with which Nancy had stared at her. "You looked so —so royal sitting up in bed with your embroidered

sheets and your pretty marceled hair and your stunning negligee that the minute I saw you I thought 'Duchess' and so I always call you Duchess in my own mind."

"Do you?" It was perfectly plain that Miss Hawks liked to appear royal, and that she would not mind if she were called Duchess outside of Nancy's mind. "H-m!" And she smiled a crooked little smile before she said suddenly, "I'm going home now. I've got what I came for. I was just about discouraged when we had that little set-to, and it seemed to clear my brain. Anyway I have the right combination now to make old Andy Macnamara wish I had never been born. In spite of the fact that I've beaten him more than once old Andy Macnamara doesn't believe that I'm a business woman." She laughed scornfully. "He thinks a woman can't be anything but a woman. I'll just show him again. I don't know when I'll be back, but when I do come, I should like to see more of you. You're good for me. You make me think."

"You make me think, too," Nancy said, but she did not tell her the thoughts which the Duchess' rude peremptory coldness had sent rushing through her brain. The Duchess was showing a decided inclination to let bygones be bygones, and Nancy was not one to cling to them.

"You can't do it if you ever want to get anywhere," she told Nancy Yates when the temptation proved almost too tempting.

So the Duchess went away, and Nancy would have

forgotten her if she had not received a package a week later, a huge box of the very best chocolates to be bought in Waloo, and nestling in the center was a little leather box which held five twenty-dollar gold pieces. There was a note which accompanied the box and it told Nancy that the writer wished to express her appreciation for the jolt which Nancy's impetuousness had given her tired old brain and which had enabled her to make old Andy Macnamara realize that a woman could occasionally show a gleam of business intelligence. And the signature read—"Gratefully—Myrtice Hawks, Duchess."

Nancy's eyes crinkled over the signature but her brows frowned at the gold pieces. "I don't want her old money!" she exclaimed ungratefully.

"Indeed you do!" contradicted Dollie Maybie, sampling the chocolates. "Think what you can do with a hundred dollars. The sight of those gold pieces is almost enough to make me go around and call the patients the most awful names I can think of."

"It is too much like a tip," frowned Nancy.

"It's a partnership share, and you have the small end as one partner often has. Your Duchess acknowledged that she had your help. You worked together. I suppose she made thousands and you got this stingy bit." And she turned up her nose at the gold pieces because they had not brought more of their brothers and sisters with them.

Nancy was only half convinced, and she was not entirely sure that she would keep the money until

she went down to the Duchess' office, which was most elaborately furnished and equipped, like a Gothic chapel, and told the Duchess to her face that she had enjoyed the candy, but she did not care to accept the gold pieces.

The Duchess laughed at her and closed Nancy's fingers over the little box and told her to run along and buy herself a new frock for she was too busy to be disturbed as her new scheme had developed an unexpected quirk, and she had to keep her eyes on it.

"If I don't I'll be back in Number Thirteen before night. Run along, my dear, and don't bother. You didn't even get your share. It is just a little token of appreciation. It is nothing to what I really owe you."

Altogether that was the strangest winter Nancy Yates had ever spent. Lady Mary Wortley Montague had to go almost around the world and live to be an old woman before she discovered that there were only two species of human beings in the world, men and women. Nancy only came from Mifflin to the hospital and she was only twenty when she made the same discovery.

And time went so fast. Every hour of every day seemed to be winged. Almost before she had laughingly, with the assistance of two young doctors, carved a Hallowe'en jack-o-lantern out of a huge pumpkin for the decoration of her ward, it was time to serve the Thanksgiving turkey and then the Christmas bells were ringing. Nancy was in the children's ward during the holidays, and she made

another visit to the Duchess in her Gothic chapel and begged for money to buy a proper celebration, a Christmas tree and wreaths for the windows and presents for every one. No bee was ever half as busy as Nancy Yates.

"I thought you told me you were lazy?" Doctor Minor looked at her quizzically when he met her with her arms full of parcels.

"If I don't keep my patients amused they make me a lot of work," she told him quickly. "Are you coming to our party? We need a jolly Santa Claus."

An unexpected guest at the Christmas party was George Yardley, who had had his salary raised and who had rushed up to Waloo to ask Nancy if she did not think that a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month was enough for a girl to keep house with.

"It might be enough for some girls." Nancy would not speak for any one but herself. Jimmie Nolan had slipped a Christmas wreath on her head, and Susie Skelton had wound Christmas greens about her neck so that she looked as if she had stepped out of a Christmas magazine. She tried to be patient with George, but really she could not marry a man just because his salary had been raised. George must stop caring for her and care for some other girl. "But it isn't enough for me. You are a dear boy, and it was sweet of you to come and tell me how well you are doing. I am glad! But you must stop thinking of me. Are you going back to-night? Will you take a little package to Doris? I didn't get it mailed. I have been so busy."

"Doris will cheer him up, if he needs to be cheered," she told Nancy Yates. "I don't see why he can't see that Doris was made for him. It is so foolish to cry for the moon when your arms are not long enough to reach it—and never will be," she went on impatiently. "Just because I haven't had even a glimpse of a prince is no sign I shan't see him tomorrow. I'm not a bit discouraged!" And she pressed her lips more firmly together as she went back to spin tops for Jimmie, and wind aëroplanes for Jack, and dress dolls for Susie and Millie, and join in the Christmas carols with every one.

If she had not been so busy she might well have been discouraged about the belated appearance of her prince, but as it was, she could keep only an occasional watchful eye on the door, as she had told Doris she meant to do, and no unattached millionaire with an incurable disease crossed the threshold. Kitty Marrison's father, old Reuben Marrison, was at the hospital for three weeks, and Kitty was a most devoted daughter. Nancy was always running across her consulting with Doctor Jensen in the reception room, in the office, in the corridor, and even in the laboratory.

"He is quite wonderful, isn't he?" Kitty asked Nancy. "Doctor Jensen, I mean. Father thinks he is awfully clever!"

"That's fine." Nancy really was glad. The future looked as rosy for Rolf Jensen as Kitty's flushed cheeks. Princess Moneybags did not seem as dilatory as her brother. "Your father can do

such a lot for a young man just starting a practice," she suggested.

"I know!" Kitty nodded her black head. "And father is the kind of man who remembers. I shouldn't let him forget if he could. I believe in helping clever young men. What is the use of being rich and influential if you don't?" she asked, and the color in her cheeks grew pinker.

"None, absolutely none!" But Nancy looked at her curiously and wondered how much she really meant. Rolf Jensen was splendid. Kitty Marrison could do worse, a lot worse, than help him. Nancy felt a stab of jealousy because she was not rich and influential so that she could help splendid young doctors.

"I like your princess enormously," she told Rolf when she met him in the elevator. "She's a dear!"

"Who?" Blank ignorance stared from Rolf's blue eyes.

"Miss Marrison, your Princess Moneybags," explained Nancy, and her eyes danced.

"Oh, yes." Rolf was not sure yet what she meant but he smiled at her dancing eyes. "She is a nice girl. And her father is a fine man. You think she is a princess?"

"I know she is!" Nancy had not a doubt. "Why, her father is a lumber king and an iron ore—an iron ore!—king. And she is dear and sweet. Of course she is a perfect princess! You'll be very foolish if you don't tell her so at once."

"Perhaps I should be." And he looked as if he

might dash to Kitty Marrison the second the elevator stopped. Nancy hoped he would, and then to her surprise she found that she hoped he would not. Girls were the contrary creatures! She could never expect Rolf Jensen to find a sweeter nor a richer girl, and yet she was not sure, not at all sure, that she wished him to marry Kitty Marrison. She sighed and shook her head.

"What a jealous cat you are!" she told Nancy Yates. "You don't want Rolf Jensen to find his princess until you have found your prince."

Instead of going down town to supplement with salads and pastry and ice cream, the rather plain fare at the nurses' home, as the majority of the girls did, Nancy took her skates over to the pond in the park, and after an hour's sport she would come back with rosy cheeks, bright eyes and radiating freshness.

"I can't afford to go with you," she told Mary Farley when Mary teased her to join a hungry group. "I have to take care of my youth and beauty until I find that foolish old prince I'm looking for. You can't preserve much beauty if you stuff yourself with French pastry."

"Oh, bother your youth and beauty!" exclaimed the disgusted Mary. "You'll never see any one in that little park."

"You never can tell." Nancy looked mysterious.

"His Highness may come there this very afternoon instead of to the operating room. I'm looking for him all the time," she said so seriously that the

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girls laughed and told her that she was a silly. And Nancy laughed with them.

But they stopped going downtown and went to skate on the park pond with Nancy. Never had there been so little illness among the student nurses as there was that winter, and Miss Bidnell plumed herself on her excellent management of her training school, although old Doctor Snodgrass told her bluntly that it was because her girls were at last showing a little sense. It was not because she had composed a few more rules.

"The way they troop over to the park you might think they expected to find diamonds there," he said gruffly.

Nancy heard him and chuckled to herself. Diamonds and princes were synonymous. And either might be found in more unlikely places than the park.

She laughed again when she met Dan Darvin one afternoon, and Dan told her that he was going right home to get his skates and then he should expect her to skate with him the remainder of the afternoon. But when Dan came back with his skates under his arm he found Rolf Jensen teaching Nancy a new figure.

"No fair," grumbled Dan. "I engaged you for this afternoon, Miss Yates. You know I did!"

"Come and learn this," coaxed Nancy. "It's fascinating! Oh I'm falling! Catch me!"

And for a second she rested against the strong arm which Rolf Jensen threw out to catch her. A

little flame ran over her as her eyes laughed into his. A spark flew from brown eyes to blue. In a flash her face sobered and she pulled herself away from the strong arm and threw cold water on the spark. How ridiculous to burst into flame just because a man kept you from falling on the ice.

"No nonsense, Nancy Yates!" she said with stern impatience. "Don't you forget that you belong to a prince! You are not interested in any young doctor!"

X

It was after midnight. Nancy looked around her ward with pardonable pride. Her patients were resting comfortably, and the night promised to be an easy one. She settled herself in the chair before the desk, which was placed in an alcove opening from the ward, and which held her shaded light, her charts and her books. Nancy liked night duty. It satisfied her pleasure in responsibility to know that the patients were dependent upon her. She felt important and powerful, like a queen.

But instead of opening her book and studying her lesson she leaned back in her chair and watched the shadows thrown by the shaded light. She had too many things to think of to study. There was George Yardley, who had written her a most imploring letter enclosing a family budget for a man earning eighteen hundred dollars a year; there was the Duchess, who was in Room Thirteen again with a sad case of temper; there was Uncle Ben, who had asked her once more if she would not rather be a newspaper girl than a nurse; there was Dan Darvin, who had wondered discontentedly what he was going to do when the skating season was over; there was "Uncle Alec" Minor, who had told Nancy that very day that she was almost as good as a doctor already; and there was Rolf Jensen, who was almost a doctor

and about whom she would rather not think. She would rather let her thoughts dwell on her prince, although his royal highness was so slow in making his appearance. And suddenly Nancy had a funny feeling that she would rather be a head nurse in a hospital than a princess of anything. "That's what training has done for you," she told Nancy Yates with a sigh.

And then she heard a sound, a tap on the window at her right. She raised her head quickly. She could see nothing but a black expanse bounded on two sides by the simple hospital curtains, and she would have opened her book to learn all about splints and bandages,—she could not waste any more of her time dreaming,—if there had not been an unmistakable thump on the window. She jumped up and crossed the alcove. She did not like to hear a window rattle. She would fasten the sash more firmly. She did not want her patients wakened.

A bed had been taken from the ward that afternoon, and the orderly had left it in the alcove. Nancy had to walk around it to reach the window. She peered through the frosted pane. She could not see—yes, she could! A face was looking straight into her face, and a hand knocked peremptorily on the glass.

"Let me in! Let me in!" demanded a muffled voice.

Nancy never hesitated. She could not run the chance of disturbing her patients, of frightening them. And surely no burglar would demand ad-

mittance in quite that fashion. She unlocked the window and raised the sash. An elderly man with a brown velvet dressing gown over his tan silk pajamas pushed by her and hurried to the radiator, where he stood shivering.

"You took your time," he murmured from between chattering teeth. "A man could freeze to death to-night."

"Where did you come from? What do you want?" He could not have come from very far in a dressing gown and pajamas, and Nancy could not imagine what he could want. She asked him in a soft voice and kept one watchful eye on the beds in the ward.

He moved closer to her, and his voice dropped to a whisper as he pulled his gown about his shoulders.

"I came down the fire escape. My room is just over this. Doctor Jayne thinks he's going to take my appendix out in the morning, but I know he isn't!" with a firm nod of his grizzled head. "They hadn't any business to leave me alone up there. I couldn't sleep, and it isn't pleasant to lie awake and think what might happen if the doctor's knife slipped. I don't see any sense in an operation now anyway. I feel fine. So I just decided I'd leave, and send word to the doctor that I'd changed my mind. I couldn't find my clothes, so I came down the fire escape to ask you to get them for me. Hurry up! I haven't any time to waste. Some one will go into my room and see that I've gone, and there'll be the

devil to pay. You go and get my clothes, and I'll give you a hundred dollars!"

"But I can't get your clothes!" Nancy almost choked with her efforts to suppress a giggle. "I don't know where they are!"

"You go and get my clothes, and I'll give you two hundred! Great Scott! I'll make it three hundred! I can't go out in the street like this! I've got to have my clothes! That fool orderly must have put them somewhere. Hurry up! I'm freezing to death!" He never doubted that she would bring his clothes to him as soon as she understood that he must have them.

But Nancy shook her head. "I can't leave my patients."

"I'll take care of them until you come back. You can leave them to me. And if you can't find my clothes you can telephone for a taxi. I'll go home in this." But he eyed with disfavor the velvet dressing gown.

Leave her patients to a man who had come down the fire-escape in tan silk pajamas? Nancy knew better than to do that. She could not and she would not, and she said so in that soft low voice which was also so firm.

"You must go back to your room," she added. "You can slip up the stairs at the end of the corridor, and no one will know you ran away."

"Go back there and stay by myself until morning!" He was horrified at the thought. Morning sounded several years away as he spoke of it. "I

shan't! I don't like it up there alone. I thought I had as much nerve as most men, but I haven't enough to stay up there by myself and wait for Doctor Jayne. I thought I wasn't afraid of anything, but I'm scared to death of my own imagination. I wouldn't have a nurse to-night, and Doctor Jayne said I didn't really need one until after the operation. But he didn't know. I'll give you five hundred if you'll get me out of this place at once! I'd like to see Jayne's face when I call him up from home and tell him the deal's off. I'll wait until I'm worse than I am now before I take any chances. If you won't get my clothes for me I'll—I'll——" He hesitated, uncertain what to threaten, and then he saw the extra bed drawn up against the alcove wall. In a flash he was in it. "I'll stay here! I shan't go off by myself! I'm afraid of the things I think!" he confessed with a shamefaced honesty.

"But you can't stay here!" It was contrary to all the hospital rules and regulations for a patient to exchange his bed for another.

"Why can't I? Say, did any one ever send you an explosive bomb in a box of candy?" he demanded.

No, no one ever had, and Nancy's eyes were saucer big as she said so.

"Then you don't know what you are talking about!" And he slipped down in the bed and drew the covers over him. "I feel safe here with you. We'll stay together!" And he closed his eyes.

Together! The word made Nancy impatient although she could understand that he might have felt

nervous alone in the suite which was over the ward. He should have had a nurse with him, whether he wanted one or not. But even if he was nervous he could not stay there in the alcove of her ward. That was quite against the rules.

"Some one's calling you," he hissed from his pillow, while his eyes watched her intently. "You better not neglect your patients. I'm all right now."

She was afraid to turn her back on him and afraid to ignore the call which came from the bed in the far corner. When she had given one patient a drink of water and turned a pillow for another, she came back to find her guest lying with his eyes closed. She watched him uneasily. She really did not see what harm would be done if she left him there so long as he was quiet. It was very clear that he would not leave quietly. He had made that very plain. And she could not have her patients disturbed. No, she would leave him alone so long as he remained quiet. Perhaps after a minute or two she could persuade him to return to his room. She wondered who he was, and what he had meant by an explosive bomb in a box of candy. What a hideous thing to think of! It made her shiver. She did not wonder that he hated to be alone if he thought of bombs. She opened her book again, but she could not keep her thoughts on splints nor bandages. They would roam from bombs to silk pajamas.

"H-st!" She looked up to see the tan pajamas bolt upright in the bed. "H-st, nurse!" exclaimed the wearer in a suppressed sort of a voice. "Do you

like maple syrup or sugar on your corn meal mush?" And before the startled Nancy could tell him that she did not like corn meal mush at all he had dropped back on the pillow and was sound asleep.

"Crazy," decided Nancy. "Just plumb crazy!" And she was scared to death to be alone in the ward with a crazy man and twelve helpless patients. She did not dare leave to summon help. She could only sit there quietly and hope with all of her heart that nothing would happen.

XI

It must have been a week later, Nancy was positive that it was at least seven days, although her wrist watch told her that it was a scant half hour, before she heard any sound but the quiet breathing of her newest patient. Nancy scarcely dared breathe herself during those scant thirty minutes. She was afraid, she did not know of what, but she sat there in the alcove, every muscle taut, ready to spring if the newest patient moved so much as a finger.

When she heard the soft scuffle of feet in the corridor it was just a hint of a sound, but it cheered Nancy enormously. No matter what happened she really was not alone. People were within call. Together—and for once the word did not make her impatient but filled her with comfort—they could take care of a crazy man with a mania for corn meal mush. But she would not ask for help so long as everything was all right. She would keep mouse-still herself so that her twelve patients should have their rest unbroken.

Never so long as Nancy had been on night duty had her patients rested so quietly. Usually there were all sorts of calls but to-night no one needed her. It almost seemed as if they had been drugged, or would have seemed so if drugs had not been a

footless thing to think about. But the newest patient did appear to have a stupefying effect on every one.

She went softly from bed to bed. No one paid any attention to her. She could not see that any one moved. The ward was drowned in sleep. Last of all she stood beside the bed in the alcove and looked down on the long wrinkled face with its broad forehead running over the bullet-shaped head until it was lost in the creases of the pillow. There was something vaguely familiar about the head. Nancy studied it thoughtfully. She was positive that she had seen it somewhere, but her memory refused to name the place, and she went back to her desk. The visitor might be a mental as well as a surgical case, but he was harmless as long as he was asleep.

Nancy swelled with pride at the way she had met the emergency. Poor old soul! She wondered if she would be nervous if she were left alone the night before an operation. Her guest had wanted to be with some one. "Together," he had said. Evidently he agreed with Uncle Ben that "together" was a comforting sort of a word. But together meant shackles to Nancy Yates. She wanted to be free, as free as air, and with heaps of money.

A hospital day begins early. The night nurse has to wash faces and prepare her patients for breakfast at an unearthly hour. Nancy hated that part of night duty. She did dislike to waken any patient who was asleep, and that morning she had to waken

all of them. But first she would get her basin and towels. They were in the adjoining bathroom.

Early as it was a little group of nurses and orderlies was standing in the corridor. Lydia Peterson stopped whispering with them and called to Nancy.

"Have you seen a stray patient?" she giggled. "A man in Number Ten got out of bed and ran away last night. Miss Maguire is crazy. She can't locate him."

"Pooh!" Nancy curled her lip in a very superior manner. "He is asleep in the extra bed in my ward. I thought he was a mental case."

"In your ward!" Miss Maguire, the hospital superintendent, and Rolf Jensen had joined them. Miss Maguire looked worried, but some of the worry left her face when she heard Nancy. "Is Mr. Macnamara in your ward?" she asked sharply.

"There is a strange man there. I don't know his name. It really isn't my fault," she explained hurriedly, before Miss Maguire could say that it was her fault. "He came down the fire-escape. I heard a noise about half-past four, and when I went to the window I saw an old man in brown velvet and tan silk. As soon as I opened the window he jumped into the extra bed in the alcove. He told me that he was to be operated on this morning, and that he was afraid to stay alone. And then—this is what made me think he was a mental case—he wanted to know whether I liked maple syrup or sugar on corn meal mush. Is he a mental case?" she asked

Rolf Jensen, as Miss Maguire hurried away to see for herself who was in the extra bed in Nancy's ward.

Rolf laughed. "There are a great many people who think he is mad as a hatter. Surely you have heard of old Andy Macnamara, the multimillionaire?"

At that Nancy's eyes did pop open. Indeed she had heard of old Andy Macnamara, who counted his fortune by millions, and who lived on the River Boulevard in the big marble mansion he had built just before his wife died. Why he was indeed a money king! And she had not know him. She had watched him for hours and had never realized who he was. She shrugged her shoulders at the lost opportunity, the very first which had come her way.

"I could shake you!" she told Nancy Yates. "No wonder his face was familiar. You have seen it in one newspaper or another every day of your life!"

"I hope he is still in your ward," chuckled Rolf. "Miss Maguire will be in a pretty stew if he has moved again."

"Moved!" Nancy ran into the ward to find Miss Maguire in a stew which was anything but pretty, for the extra bed was empty, the window was wide open.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Nancy quite unnecessarily.

The twelve patients stared at her, and six of them tried to tell her at the same time what had happened.

"You shouldn't have left him!" exclaimed Miss

Bidnell, who joined the group which stood staring at the empty bed.

Miss Bidnell was rather unreasonable for she, herself, had proposed the rule that the patients should be made ready for breakfast by the night nurse, who would be replaced at seven o'clock by the day nurse. The clock was just on the stroke of seven, and not one of Nancy's patients had been made ready for breakfast.

"Where do you suppose he has gone?" went on Miss Bidnell. "Really, patients can be very annoying!"

Rolf Jensen had his head out of the window and was looking up the fire-escape.

"I expect he has gone back to his room," he said. "I'll run up and see."

"I'll go with you!" But Miss Maguire and Miss Bidnell hurried out before him.

"I hope you will send some one to stay with him," Nancy detained Rolf long enough to say. "Are you going to operate on him to-day?"

"No. Doctor Jayne was taken ill last night and won't be able to be here this morning. I went in to tell Mr. Macnamara and found his room empty."

"Not operate!" exclaimed a voice from the window and there was the missing patient, looking more like a naughty boy than a multi-anything. "Glory be! I know now how a condemned criminal must feel when he is reprieved. I don't believe an operation is necessary as I told you last night, nurse." He looked at Nancy to remind her what he had told her.

"Miss Yates." Nancy made the correction mechanically. She was staring at this King Moneybags, who popped in and out of hospital windows in such an irresponsible sort of a way.

"We don't need to argue about that now." Rolf spoke soothingly and put his hand on the King's shoulder. "Come back to bed or you will catch cold and die of pneumonia and cheat us out of the operation altogether."

For a moment the King looked as if he were not going to be a good boy and do as he was told, but Rolf's hand was heavy and compelling. "You left me alone last night," he grumbled.

"You should have rung for a nurse. There wasn't any reason why you should be alone if you wanted company."

"That was what I thought. And that's why I came down to stay with this little girl. She took very good care of me. I haven't slept in weeks as I slept after I got into that bed over there. Together we made a good job of it, my dear!" And he beamed at Nancy, who stared and stared.

So this was a multimillionaire! What a poor little creature he was with his nervous fear.

"That was fine. But really you must come with me, Mr. Macnamara. You will catch cold, and you are detaining Miss Yates. She has all these patients to take care of." And he called the King's attention to the twelve faces staring so curiously at him.

A stare, even twelve stares, meant nothing to the King, and he never looked at the patients.

"Great tyrants, these doctors," he grumbled to Nancy. "I suppose I'll have to go. But don't you worry, my dear. I shan't forget you. Didn't I ask you something last night? I can't quite remember." He frowned as he tried to remember.

"You wanted to know if I liked maple syrup on corn meal mush." Nancy's two dimples twinkled as she told him what he had asked.

"So I did. And you never answered me. We'll have to talk of that again. The devil! Here comes that white starch proposition," as Miss Maguire came in to tell them that Mr. Macnamara was not in his room. "No, I'm here! I'm just going back. I came down, Miss Maguire," he said in a very royal way, "to find companionship. I didn't like to be left alone."

Poor Miss Maguire! She did her best to explain, but the King waved an impatient hand. Explanations never interested him. It was action which he wished.

"You should have given me this little girl." His finger pointed directly to the bib of Nancy's white apron. "She has a head on her shoulders. I suppose I scared her into forty fits, but she didn't call out, and she didn't fuss. No, sir, she showed sense and initiative and decision." Nancy's back straightened and her eyes opened as she heard all that she had showed. "She's too smart to be a nurse," the King went on, all admiration. "Just you wait, my

dear," he promised Nancy, "I'll remember you. I shan't forget. And now, Miss Maguire, if it annoys you for me to be here I'll go back to my room." He wrapped his dressing gown more closely about him and stalked away.

"My word!" How Nancy did stare after him. It seemed as if the brown velvet changed to royal purple and trimmed itself with ermine. "He is as rich as cream, isn't he? He could send me a diamond tiara—or a check for a million—and never miss it. I'd like either of them better than a wedding ring!" And she laughed.

Rolf Jensen was halfway through the door, but he stopped and looked back at her. "I hope," he said, and there was considerable disgust in his voice, "I hope you don't think this poor old man is the prince you like to talk about."

"No, I don't!" Nancy tossed her head. His disgust and scorn only amused her. "I know he is more than a prince. Why he's old King Moneybags himself!"

XII

NANCY was furious at Nancy Yates and called her all sorts of names, silly! idiot! bonehead! To think that Opportunity had insisted on coming to her through the window and had been diagnosed as a mental case. No wonder Nancy groaned. She could never expect any expression of appreciation, a check for a million or a diamond tiara, for such a service, so she was not disappointed when no royal package was handed to her by ten o'clock when, according to the hospital rules, the night nurses went to bed, nor by four o'clock, when those same arbitrary rules called "Get up! Get up!" to the sleepy night nurses.

"You had your chance," she said sternly to poor mortified Nancy Yates. "And you can't blame any one but yourself that you didn't take advantage of it. You may thank your lucky stars that you are such a firm believer in anticipation so long as there is so little participation for you. My word!" She drew a long breath, "What would you do if you ever did get that diamond tiara? You would have nothing to look forward to." Life without a diamond tiara to anticipate would be life wasted to Nancy Yates.

"I hope I'll die before I have everything I want!" she said once to Rolf Jensen, and there had been a fierce little note in her voice as if she just would not

wish to live after she had all of her wishes gratified. "It must be perfectly ghastly not to want a single solitary thing!"

So now, just for the pure fun of it, she let her fancy play and imagined the many things the old King might have done for her if she had only used the brains God had given her and not teased the King by insisting that he should do this or that. Perhaps it was just as well she had so little time in which to build air castles during the day when she slept so soundly, as the hospital rules ordered, from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon, and she never even dreamed. It was at night when her patients were quiet and her fingers were busy with surgical sponges or compresses that her thoughts would run back to that night when Opportunity had tapped at the window. What had the King meant when he talked of corn meal mush and maple syrup? And explosive bombs in candy boxes? How queer old men were—especially rich old men. The King must be at least seventy. Nancy shivered. Seventy was the same as a hundred to her. Rolf Jensen, she remembered, was twenty-seven, and she was twenty-one. Just imagine—twenty-one! She shivered again because she was so very old. Shelley at twenty-nine declared that he felt older than his father, and Byron at thirty-three sighed to think that he was a veteran, and Nancy Yates at twenty-one felt sorry because she never would be young again. Dear me, how could she ever live to be as old as the King! It would be tragic to be seventy. What a

lot of things one would have to look back upon, and how little to look forward to! Absolutely nothing but a well-conducted funeral. B-r-r! Old as she was, Nancy was thankful for every year that separated twenty-one from seventy. She would stay twenty-one just as long as she could, to the very last minute. It would be so horrid not to enjoy looking forward to riches and power and a closet full of smart clothes and a pantry full of good eats.

It might have been a week later, and she had almost forgotten her midnight visitor, that she went hurriedly through the third floor corridor—Rich Man's Alley the nurses called it, for the most expensive suites opened from it. Nancy's eyes widened when she saw the King enthroned in a wheel chair and attended by two nurses and an orderly. He recognized Nancy at once and called to her.

"Well, they've got me at last!" he told her grimly. "They didn't give me a chance to run away last night and make you a visit. Gave me two nurses. I wanted you to take care of me, but that highly starched monstrosity said you didn't know enough. Book knowledge isn't the only thing, I told her, and I'd rather have an agreeable personality than a diploma, but she insisted that there was a certain responsibility that the hospital couldn't take. You'll come and see me soon, won't you? I haven't forgotten you. And say——" He took a folded paper from the pocket of the brown velvet dressing gown and offered it to her. "Here, you take care of this

for me, will you? I don't want to leave it around where it might be lost. I forgot to give it to Wylie. I was going to ask the doctor to put it in the safe but it'll be all right with you. Just keep it until I'm my own man again."

"I will." Nancy took the slip of paper and shut it between the pages of the *Materia Medica for Nurses* which she carried under her arm. "I'll keep it very carefully, and just as soon as you want it you shall have it. I do hope you will have a comfortable time, but you will. Doctor Jayne is a wonderful surgeon, and you are going to be a wonderful patient. I know you are."

The optimistic outburst brought the grim smile to the King's lips again.

"Together then we should make a record breaker of this. I hope you are a good prophet. But anyway you have that memorandum. Remember and come and see me soon. All right, nurse, take me to the butcher shop." And he waved his wrinkled hand to Nancy as he was wheeled to the elevator.

"Poor old soul!" murmured Nancy, and then she remembered that he was one of the wealthiest men in Waloo, and she corrected her thought. "Lucky old man to be able to have everything that money can buy! If he were a poor patient he wouldn't have the most expensive suite in the hospital with a private sun porch and a private bath. But perhaps he wouldn't be alone either." In her ward where the patients were all poor not one of them was alone, at least during visiting hours. Relatives came in

streams until the nurse had to send them away. That was one splendid thing about night duty to Nancy Yates. She did not have to argue nor explain to relatives and friends.

The door of the Duchess' room just beyond was open, and Nancy stopped to say good-morning and ask her how the new business scheme was developing. A strange friendship had grown up between them out of the Duchess' accusation and Nancy's defiance.

"It was like a thunder storm on a hot sultry day," Nancy told Doctor Minor. "It cleared the atmosphere. It was queer, wasn't it? There was something antagonistic the very first time I saw her, when I took her a glass of water. I felt it the minute I entered the room. But after the flare-up it was different. Funny how you feel toward people. I like almost every one. I don't think there is anything in the world quite as interesting as people, and the Duchess is so peculiar any one would find her interesting. I never knew a woman like her!"

"Thank heaven that there isn't another like her!" Doctor Minor exclaimed fervently.

The Duchess was just finishing her breakfast as Nancy peeped in, and the tray said that it had been a very hearty breakfast. Fruit and coffee and toast might be all very well for some people, according to the Duchess, but a business woman had to feed her brain and bolster up her courage on hearty fare which would really stick to her bones.

"What is all the excitement?" she asked as she swallowed the last morsel of bacon and egg. "I

heard people talking and running about, and I'm quite sure that I heard them talking about old Andy Macnamara!"

"You must have been dreaming." Nancy knew better than to retail hospital happenings. "I don't wonder if you ate as much for dinner as you have for breakfast. Nothing the matter with your appetite is there? Don't you wish you were Nancy Yates, on your way to bed instead of just getting up." She smothered a yawn, but allowed herself to stretch a bit, and the book—*Materia Medica for Nurses*—dropped from under her arm to the bed.

The Duchess lifted it curiously and fluttered the leaves. "If you have to study such stuff as this you might as well be a doctor," she said, as she saw the illustrations and read the chapter headings. "I didn't realize that nurses have to know so much about medicine and surgery."

"We have to know all about them," Nancy told her proudly.

"What's this, a diet?" The Duchess picked up a paper which had fallen from the book and smoothing it out looked at it idly.

Nancy gasped. It was the paper which the King had asked her to take care of for him. What a careless idiot she had been!

"I don't know." It was the truth and she told it carelessly so that the Duchess would regard the paper as unimportant. "I tuck all sorts of trash in my books. Let me see?" And she held out her hand.

But instead of giving it to her the Duchess turned the paper over and saw that it was plainly marked at the top in blue letters, "Andrew O. Macnamara, Waloo."

"Andy Macnamara!" The Duchess was surprised. "Where did you get Andy Macnamara's stationary for your notes? And what is this memorandum? It sounds like trash. 'Corn,'" she frowned as she tried to decipher the penciled scrawl, "'popped and ground. S. or M. S. Possibly compressed.' There doesn't seem to be any sense to it." And she looked at Nancy as if that were Nancy's fault.

"No, there doesn't! Not a grain of sense! It's probably nothing. My book gets full of all sorts of rubbish. Let me see."

"'Corn—popped—ground!'" The Duchess drew away from her and read the scrawl again. "No, it isn't rubbish, my dear. I know old Andy Macnamara's writing, and he doesn't waste his time on rubbish. It means something. I should give considerable to know what!" And she looked at Nancy in a hungry sort of way as if she thought that Nancy should tell her what she wanted to know.

"I don't know anything about that." Nancy dexterously obtained the paper as the Duchess' fingers relaxed, and tucked it into her book again. "I am not good at ciphers. And where would I get a memorandum made by a multimillionaire?" It sounded the most improbable thing in the world when she put it that way.

But the Duchess was not to be diverted. Myrtice Hawks would never have become a duchess if she had allowed herself to be diverted from any problem which she wished to solve.

"Andy Macnamara is in this hospital!" she said suddenly. "Yes, he is, I know! That was why I heard his name. The memorandum dropped from his pocket and you picked it up. Of course that was the way!" She was triumphant

Her explanation served as well as another, and Nancy never contradicted it. Anyway she had the paper. She did not realize that the Duchess had an excellent memory and that the few words on the paper were now stored methodically away in it. Nancy never thought that every time old Andy Macnamara made a mark with his pencil it would mean something to some one. The memorandum had sounded like utter nonsense as the Duchess read it. So had the question the King had asked her the night he had sought companionship in her ward, but now that she brought them together, as she realized that they both did deal with corn, she did not know what to think. They might mean something, as the Duchess insisted. But if they did that was the old King's business, and all Nancy had to do was to keep the paper safe and return it to him when he asked for it. She must not discuss it with the Duchess.

"It sounds like a new breakfast food to me," went on the Duchess, pursing up her lips.

"It sounds like chicken feed to me," insisted Nancy. "Or dog biscuit. But I must go to bed.

According to the rules I should be asleep this very minute."

But the Duchess was not interested in the rules. She was following a new train of thought. "Chicken feed?" she repeated meditatively. "I wonder!"

She looked so very wise as she wondered, that Nancy had palpitation. Suppose the King was going to add chicken feed to the many irons he had in the financial fire, and she had given his formula to a business rival? But that was nonsense. The Duchess was not in the chicken feed business. The Duchess dealt in land and mortgages. Nancy knew, because the Duchess had told her how she had developed this section of the city and how she was working with the street railway to open up that new district. There could not be any connection between land and corn even if the corn was popped and ground. She was making a fine mountain out of a little molehill, she bravely told Nancy Yates.

"'M. S.,'" mumbled the Duchess. "What on earth could he mean by 'M.S.'?"

Nancy knew. Memory and intuition told her that M stood for maple and S for syrup, but she did not tell the Duchess. She could keep something to herself. She had betrayed enough. She would guard the rest of the King's secret with her life, if necessary. And she chuckled nervously. It was so ridiculous.

"Modern surgery," she suggested, when the Duchess wondered again what the letters could mean. "Good-by, and don't bother about this scrawl. A

man like Mr. Macnamara wouldn't trouble with such a small thing as chicken feed."

"Nothing that will make money is small, and large fortunes have been made out of what people waste. Don't tell me. It may be a cereal. People eat more breakfast food every day. If every family in the country had a bowl of corn every morning it would mean——Now I wonder——" She looked eagerly at Nancy as if at last she had a clew. "This may be why old Andy Macnamara wants that tract of land up at Crystal Creek. It must be! He is going to put up a factory. Of course that's it! Run along, my dear, and don't talk to me any more. You have given me something quite important to think about."

"I seem to have." Nancy Yates went away the most disgusted nurse in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital. And the person she was disgusted with was Nancy Mary Yates. What an idiot she had been! But the memorandum could not be important! The Duchess must be all wrong. And yet the King had told her to guard the paper carefully. Oh dear! she wished that she were a scrub woman!

XIII

AFTER a few days of such discomfort that the King did not see why the surgeons had troubled to revive him from the anesthetic, he convalesced rapidly. He was not a pleasant patient, and his two nurses had their four hands more than full. He was like a child in his demand for change, for amusement, for anything which would make the slow moving time move faster. His secretary came every morning for an hour, but what were sixty minutes in a sea of fourteen hundred and forty?

It was on the twelfth day that he remembered Nancy Yates and sent a royal command to her to come at once. Nancy could not come at once, but she went as soon as she could. She quaked in her white canvas shoes as she took the paper the King had entrusted to her from its hiding place and put it in her pocket. Thank goodness he had asked for it. She had been scared to death of it. What would he say when he heard that the Duchess had read it? Of course she would have to tell him, for the Duchess might build a chicken feed factory or a dog biscuit plant before the King could leave the hospital and then, indeed, there would be a certain gentleman from the torrid regions to pay.

But even if she was quaking in her white canvas shoes she had to stop and laugh when she approached

the royal suite for extending from the royal door along the corridor, on either side, were vases and bowls of roses, red, pink and yellow. They looked like a florist's shop gone wrong. Evidently the King was like that other royalty, Anne of Austria, and hated roses. Nancy would inquire about that, she told Nancy Yates as she tapped lightly on the door.

The King with his brown, wizened face on the pillow was like a raisin in a loaf of white cake. His dull eyes brightened when he saw Nancy, and he held out an eager hand.

"Well," he began reproachfully, "I didn't expect I would have to send for you. Didn't I tell you I wanted you to come and see me?"

"Yes." Nancy held the wrinkled hand in her cool firm fingers. "But I didn't know you were ready for visitors. I was afraid you would treat me as you did your flowers, put me outside the door." And she laughed as she nodded to the door on the other side of which were the dozens and dozens of roses.

He laughed, too, rather grimly. "Generous of me to have them out there where every one can see them. I hated them in here," he confided sharply. "They made me feel like a corpse at a funeral. I don't mind one or two, but I hate them wholesale. Take them if you want them. I don't! Maybe you know some patient who would like a dozen or two."

"I know ten patients!" Nancy remembered a

ward which did not have a flower in it on that particular afternoon. "Ten patients who would love them. Indeed, I'll be glad to take them. Don't worry about that, and thank you kindly."

"H—m," he grunted, and he looked at her as she stood beside him in her blue and white gingham gown and white apron and the cap which never yet had fallen on the face of a patient. He made her shiver all down her very straight backbone by asking gruffly: "Didn't I give you something to take care of for me? I have a faint recollection that I handed you a paper before I went up to that butcher shop of yours."

Although her backbone was nothing but a trembling length of jelly Nancy kept her voice steady. She allowed it to be apologetic but she would not let it emulate her spine.

"Yes, you did. You gave me a paper, and I'll have to tell you that I put it in my book, *Materia Medica for Nurses,* you know," as if he cared what book it was. "And I stopped to see the Duch—I mean Miss Hawks and——"

"Myrtice Hawks!" The words were a shot, like two shots rather, from a pistol, and his brows drew together in a shaggy frown.

"Yes, Miss Myrtice Hawks. She is here now recovering from a business deal, you know."

"I know." The King chuckled as if he did know quite a bit about that business deal.

"My book dropped on her bed, and the paper fell out, and before I could pick it up she had it. And

she read it!" There, confession was made, and Nancy's backbone ceased to shiver.

"She did?" Nancy could not tell whether the King was furiously angry or mildly amused for he hid his face behind his big handkerchief, and his shoulders shook.

"Yes, she read it out loud, so that I know what was on it, too." Nancy's heart stopped thumping. The King could do no more than order, "Off with her head!"

"What was on it?" The King might have been conducting an examination, he was so very business-like.

"It said"—Nancy could hear the Duchess' curious voice reading the memorandum as plain as plain, and unconsciously she imitated it—" 'Corn, popped and ground. S or M. S. Possibly compressed.' " She frowned as she tried to remember if there had been a word more. "That was all!"

"H—m," he grunted again, and he studied his fingers as if he found a new interest in them, before he raised his eyes and looked steadily at Nancy. "And what did you and Myrtice make out of that?"

"Nothing. At least I didn't. It sounded like a breakfast food to Miss Hawks and like chicken feed to me. You know I came from a country town," she explained, so he might know why she had thought of chickens.

He burst into a loud laugh, a very hearty laugh for a sick man, and he wiped his eyes before he said another word.

"I'll wager Myrtice thought of breakfast food. What a suspicious woman she is! I guess you gave her something to think of. I'll bet she sent for a ton or two of statistics and cereal reports." And he laughed again.

Nancy laughed, too. She had told him what she had done and what she had thought, but she would not tell tales on the Duchess, although she knew at that moment the Duchess was almost buried under the pamphlets and reports which she was reading with a pencil and a notebook as well as her two very sharp eyes.

"I hope I haven't spoiled any of your plans," she said instead. "It was careless of me, but it all happened so quickly."

"It was careless of you," agreed the King with a chuckle, "but so long as you keep chicken feed in your mind and Myrtice Hawks only thinks of breakfast food perhaps I'll weather the storm." And he chuckled again. "Myrtice is a queer old girl, isn't she?"

"We are not allowed to discuss one patient with another," Nancy told him demurely.

"Well, she is a queer old girl! And I'm a queer old man! But I like girls, like 'em young and with dimples." He smiled approvingly at Nancy, who hid her dimples at once as if she were afraid that the King had designs on them. "What are you doing in this place?" he asked in the sharp manner which always gave him a prompt reply.

Nancy looked at him in surprise. What would

she be doing in a hospital? So long as she was not a patient there was but one thing. "I'm getting ready to earn thirty-five dollars a week," she told him truthfully.

"Thirty-five dollars a week!" It was less than a penny, far, far less to hear him speak of it. "A bright clever girl who knows how to hold her tongue shouldn't be satisfied with thirty-five dollars a week. I don't suppose you know shorthand? or typewriting?" She shook her head, and he went on; "If you did it wouldn't be long before I could make you somebody's secretary at several thousand a year to begin with. That's what you should be thinking of. Thirty-five dollars a week!" He snorted in disgust.

"Well," Nancy spoke slowly, and there was a twinkle in her eyes, and her dimples crept from their hiding place, "I don't mind telling you that thirty-five dollars a week is not the height of my ambition. I plan for considerable more."

"I should hope so. And I'll help you. You're too clever to be wasted taking pulses and carrying trays. I'm an old man," he paused and looked at Nancy.

Nancy's heart thumped, and the color rushed into her cheeks. What did he mean? It was so very plain that he meant something. Involuntarily she stepped back, and her breath quickened.

"I don't suppose you know my grandson?" asked the King, when he had paused long enough for Nancy to be a perfect turmoil inside.

No, Nancy knew no more about his grandson

than she did about stenography or typewriting. She never knew that he had a grandson. But if he had, why the grandson would be—Prince Moneybags! Nancy stopped blushing to laugh at her own foolish thoughts.

"H—m!" the King was grunting again. "I wish he were here. I'll have Wylie,"—Mr. Wylie was the royal secretary,—"wire him to-morrow. He's in California with his sister, and they should come home and look after me. I shouldn't be here alone with only nurses and doctors when I've got a grandson and a granddaughter." Now that he thought of it he grew quite angry that he had been left alone with only nurses and doctors. "Wylie shall wire the first thing in the morning. Or you might do it now! Here, take this—" he turned her into a secretary without a moment's notice—" 'Andrew Macnamara, Junior, Hotel Maryland, Pasadena, California. Come home at once. A. O. Macnamara.' Send it immediately."

Nancy looked at the message she had written, and her lips twisted scornfully. "Will he come if you send for him like that?" she asked, and there was a scornful note in her voice.

"Sure he'll come." The King seemed surprised that she should think that Andy Junior would not come.

"I'd hate a man who would let himself be ordered from one part of the country to another without any reason." There was no cause for Nancy to be excited over this message, but she was excited, and the

King could see that she was, for he had his glasses on his nose.

"You would?" He regarded her from below grizzled brows. "H—m! I don't want you to begin by hating Andy. If you really feel that way, why here, take another message—'Want you here at once. Need your advice on corn!'" He laughed heartily at the second message. "I hope Myrtice hears of this. How is that? Like him any better if he comes in answer to that?"

"A lot. You give him a reason, not an order. That's treating him like a human being. You wouldn't stir a step in answer to that first message if you were your grandson."

And after a moment he admitted that he wouldn't, that he would have to have a reason.

"Of course you would. People are all alike. You would know that if you were a student nurse."

"I don't have to be a student nurse to know it. You can't go far in any line without knowing something about people. You've got to know about them because you have to work with them. You can't do much alone, you know. You have to work together with people."

"Together!" Nancy tilted a scornful nose. "That's the word Uncle Ben Purdy thinks is so important. I didn't believe him when he talked to me, and I'm not sure that I believe him now," she decided after a second's careful consideration of the word.

"Well, I know, and you may take it from me.

No man, or woman either, does anything, really does it, alone. You have to work with other people. But don't argue, call up Wylie and have that message sent. I want you to meet my grandson, and I want you to like him. He is all the grandson I have," as if poverty in grandsons was any reason why Nancy Yates should like Andrew Macnamara, Junior.

Nancy grinned like a Cheshire cat as she went down the corridor with King Moneybags' message to—of course it was to Prince Moneybags. And then, strangely enough, she frowned. She was not sure that she wanted to meet any prince quite yet. She liked the hospital life too well, its work and its play, and she was not ready to give it up even for a prince and his millions.

"You must get your diploma first," she told Nancy Yates. "If you want your life to be like a vacuum cleaned room, neat and orderly, you must finish what you begin. If the prince should come now it would be most inconvenient. I don't want to see so much as the tip of his finger until the month before graduation. Then," she laughed, "the same gown will do for both unless nurses are so foolish as to graduate in their uniforms."

She had half a mind not to send the message, and then she remembered that the prince she was looking for must have an incurable disease. The King had never spoken of his grandson as an invalid. To be sure people went to California for health as well as pleasure, but Nancy rather thought that young Andy

Macnamara belonged in the pleasure seeking group. In that case she had no reason to worry, and she called Mr. Wylie and gave him the message. She wondered what young Andy's advice on corn would be worth. Nancy was really more curious about corn at that moment than she was about the grandson. The Duchess had infected her with some of her own feverish curiosity.

When she went back to tell the King that the message had been sent, she carried a box addressed to Andrew Macnamara.

"Here is a present for you," she said as she went into the room. "More flowers for my ward. Only the box feels too heavy for flowers."

"Heavy!" The King would have jumped from his bed if he had been able. "Then it's a bomb! I know it is! Last time they sent me one in a candy box and now it's in a flower box. Throw it out of the window!"

"And blow up a perfectly good gardener!" Although the proper treatment of bombs was not in her course of study, Nancy took the box hurriedly into the adjoining bathroom, placed it in the tub and turned on the water, hot and cold. "There!" she called. "Shall we send for the police or for Miss Bidnell and Miss Maguire?"

The King was staring through the open door. "I don't believe it was a bomb!" He seemed ashamed of his excitement. "I guess I've got bombs on the brain. You don't hear anything ticking, do you? Maybe it wasn't a bomb."

Nancy bent a listening ear over the tub. "I don't hear a thing," she reported. "Shall I open the box?"

"No!" he shrieked. "Don't touch it! If any one is to be blown up I'd rather it would be Miss Bidnell. Hello, there goes Jensen. Call him in. He's a socialist. He might as well be blown up as not."

"You bet he's a socialist!" Rolf Jensen exclaimed when he had answered the King's peremptory call for help. "But he hasn't anything to do with bombs. Who is going to be blown up?"

"Miss Yates——" began the King, but Rolf did not wait for another word. He dashed into the bathroom to see Nancy bending over a tub which was half full of water.

"Don't come in here!" Nancy called sharply. "You can't tell what this box will do!"

"Let him see what it will do!" The King was frantic that he was not there to see for himself. "There are plenty of young doctors in the world. He wouldn't be missed if he were blown up. And I've had several nurses, but I never had one like you. I don't want you blown up. Let him look, Miss Yates!"

But long before he had said all of that Rolf had pushed Nancy away and was feeling in the tub for the pasteboard box which had lost its shape under the pressure of the hot and cold water. He would have taken it in his hands if Nancy had not stopped him.

"It's a bomb!" she stammered, paper-white and saucer-eyed. "The King—I mean Mr. Macnamara said it was!" She knew that she would die if he were blown to pieces there before her eyes. She just could not live if she should see any one blown to pieces.

"Bomb! Nonsense. Even anarchists don't send bombs to patients in hospitals. Let me see." In spite of her efforts to prevent him, he cut the string and raised the cover of the box, leaving the box itself under water.

"What is it? What is it?" shrieked the King. "Darn it! If you don't tell me I'll come and see for myself!"

But Nancy and Rolf were laughing so that they could not tell him for several minutes, and he could not go to see for himself in spite of his brave threat. He had to lie there in bed until Nancy caught up a towel, and Rolf lifted the now shapeless box and put it in her hands.

"You took your time. I might have died of a hemorrhage for all you cared," grumbled the King furiously as Nancy carried the dripping box to the bed. He had half a mind not to look, to tell her that he was accustomed to being obeyed instantly, but curiosity was stronger than injured feelings, and he glared into the sodden mass of pasteboard. "What is it? Well, I'll be darned!" He stared with unbelieving eyes at three prairie chickens which lay there. "Bill Gleason must have sent them from North Dakota. Closed season, so he disguised

them as flowers. It's against the law, you know, to send prairie chickens from one state to another. And I thought it was a bomb! Lord knows, you would have thought so too, if you had some of the mail I've had lately. Darn fool agitators! They don't know that the best friend labor has is the man who furnishes work. It isn't the man who stirs up a strike. I've treated my people decent all my life, given them fair hours and good wages and good conditions, but just now when everybody is so darned irresponsible and socialists are turning into I. W. W.'s overnight, why—I guess the truth of the matter is that I lost my head!" he confessed frankly. "I'm an old fool! But I'm glad it wasn't a bomb, and that you weren't blown up, Miss Yates. I should miss you, and I want my grandson to know you."

"And I'm glad you weren't blown up!" Nancy was still a trifle breathless, and she colored when he spoke of his grandson. Indeed she was glad that the King had not been blown up. She did not want to lose the old King as soon as she had found him. She liked him. He amused her enormously.

"And I'm glad I wasn't blown up." Rolf had to be glad for himself as neither Nancy nor the King expressed any congratulations. "Even if Mr. Macnamara does think there are too many young doctors in the world."

"You think there are too many millionaires in the world!" reminded the King, who could give a tit for

a tat as well as any one. Fright had not injured the quickness of his brain.

"I certainly do." Rolf stuck by his guns. "If I had my way a man wouldn't be allowed to accumulate more than ten millions. That is enough for any one."

"You're a bachelor," grunted the man who had accumulated considerably more than ten millions. "You don't know. What would you do with what's over? Divide it, I suppose, so that everybody can be rich and happy on an extra sixty cents."

"No, I shouldn't divide it. I know better than that. You would only get it back. I should turn it over to the state. I should let you earn for yourself first and then for your country."

"Much you think of your country when you're trying to tear it to pieces."

"I thought enough of it to fight for it," smiled Rolf. "And I think enough of it to want to keep it to the old plans and specifications—'for the people and by the people.' The constitution I studied says, 'We, the people of the United States.' It doesn't say a word about we, the millionaires of the United States. Now does it?"

"I'd like to give you a million or two and see what you would believe in then. Theory and practice are two vastly different things as you'll discover when you are a real working man.

"That's true enough, but without the theorists this little old world wouldn't have moved far from the Stone Age. Which reminds me of your chickens.

What are you going to do with your," he laughed, "bombs?"

"Eat them. If you don't tip off the game warden I'll give a small dinner to-night. Miss Yates and Doctor Jensen will dine with me. Telephone my cook, will you, Miss Yates? I don't care much for your hospital *chef*. Thank heaven I'm not on a diet. I should die if I had to live on milk and water. We'll dine at——"

"Six," suggested Nancy, her eyes sparkling at the thought of the dinner which the King was to give. "I have to go on duty at seven, you know."

XIV

THE KING'S dinner was a huge success. The table, set for three, was drawn to his bed, and Nancy dared to take one of the vases of pink roses from outside the door and place it in the center where the big fragrant blossoms looked more at home. The King grumbled at the menu, his cook had not prepared a proper accompaniment for the prairie chickens, but to Nancy the rich food was delicious.

"M—m, aren't these good!" she exclaimed when she had sampled the prairie chickens which were cooked to a turn. Nancy sounded as if she would agree with Doctor Samuel Johnson, that a man might travel all over the world without seeing anything better than his dinner.

"Like 'em better than you do corn, popped and ground?" There was a twinkle in the King's eye. "Miss Yates and I," he kindly explained to Rolf Jensen, "have a secret. Haven't we?"

Nancy hesitated to endorse that statement. "I think you are the one who has the secret. That is why poor Miss Hawks is up to her neck in reports. I should rather have prairie chickens. I wish all bombs were like these," she told the King with a hearty enjoyment she made no attempt to disguise.

"They should be." Propped up on his pillows, the King was thoroughly pleased with his party.

"Not prairie chickens, of course, but the good feeling which sent the chickens. That's the trouble with young fellows like our young doctor, here, they can't see that capital and labor have got to work together." Nancy put down her fork and looked at him resentfully. If there was one word in the English language which made her tired, it was that "together" word. She met it just everywhere. "Neither can go very far alone. Together," he repeated thoughtfully, as if he had read Nancy's mind. "It's a great word and means more to me every day I live. I used to think that the individual could struggle up by himself, but he can't. He's got to have help from somebody. And he can't really help himself without helping other people. That's curious, isn't it? And it should make us more unselfish than we are. No, we're dependent in our business, our social relations and our affections, aren't we, Miss Bright Eyes?"

Nancy's eyes were bright, and her cheeks were pink, but her nose was elevated. "I hate to think so. I should rather think I can live as I please——"

"And love as you please. All young people think that until the years teach them differently. It would be great sport, wouldn't it," he went on scornfully, "to love by yourself? No, you can take it from me, young lady, that it requires more than one person to do anything in this world, even love."

"I'm not interested in love," Nancy told him hastily and with a toss of her red head.

Rolf Jensen approved her stand. "There are more important things," he insisted.

The King looked at them and laughed scornfully. "Lord, how young you are!" He sighed enviously. "I can remember when I thought I could paddle my own canoe, and I didn't want any one in the canoe with me. I vowed I could get along without love, and the very next week I was head over heels in love with a yellow-haired, blue-eyed girl who didn't know parsnips from carrots. I was ready to sacrifice everything for her. I did sacrifice some things, but together—together, mind you—we made a home and found what was worth more than all the sacrifices. We lived together for over forty years. I should hate to think what a barren waste those years would have been if I had trudged over them alone. I can imagine, for I've been alone since my wife died."

Nancy looked at Rolf and her lips curled. He just nodded his head as if he understood what was in her thoughts. Such drivel! Sentiment might be all very well in the lives of some people, but it should not come into their lives to block their plans and interfere with their progress. No, indeed! The King saw how determined they were to keep the doors of their hearts locked against sentiment, and he grunted and sneered.

"You don't believe me, do you? Funny how each generation has to learn the same lesson. I wouldn't listen to my elders, and you won't listen to yours.

What's that?" He cocked his ears as he heard a strain of music, rich and full.

Nancy cocked her ears, too, and then she smiled softly. "It's a proud father," she explained. "Paul Kanoni of the Symphony Orchestra has a new little son, and he asked Miss Maguire if he couldn't come and play to his wife for an hour this evening. He said only in his music could he express how glad and proud he was. It's lovely, isn't it?" And for some reason a lump slipped into her throat as she listened to the beautiful slumber song played on that most poignant of all instruments, the 'cello.

"It's sentiment, pure sentiment," the King told her. "Something you'd cut right out of your life if you had your way."

"Oh, no!" Nancy's contradiction was sharp and quick. "I shouldn't cut it out altogether. I should just postpone it until I was ready for it."

"That's exactly what I said," dryly. "Isn't it, Doctor Jensen? Convenient is usually just another way of saying never. Have some more chicken, Miss Yates? Doctor Jensen, give her that other breast."

"It's delicious, and I shall have a weeny bit more. I have the most awful appetite. But we don't have prairie chicken every day, do we?" and she appealed to Rolf.

"What do you have?" The King kindly expressed a mild interest in hospital fare.

Nancy laughed. "We get better than we did, don't we? The table last fall was awful, nothing

but baked beans and dried prunes. It wasn't a working diet at all. I vowed I shouldn't stand it, and I rounded up a committee to protest. But Miss Maguire said that everything was so high we should be glad to have beans. The next time the hospital board met—you know the members come here once a month to eat and talk and criticize—I dared the girls to change their lunch of lamb chops and peas and ice cream for our dried-up beans and measly prunes. They were scared to death, but we did it. The kitchen was on our side, you see. There was a regular conspiracy. Dear me! you would have thought that I had stolen that lunch. I was almost expelled—wasn't I, Doctor Jensen?—for misapplication of food. Luckily there were some sensible people on the board. The Duch—I mean Miss Hawks was one. And when I explained that I couldn't keep my youth and beauty and health on baked beans and prunes, that the girls shouldn't be expected to work without proper food, the majority agreed with me after sampling the beans and looking at the prunes. Since then we've had fairly decent food, not gorgeous like this, you know, but plain and well cooked."

"I would have fired you," the King told her. "I would have fired you at once."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't. You would have done exactly as the trustees did, for you know that even student nurses can't do proper work without proper food. I feel heaps better myself. It is just an illustration of your 'together' proposition," she told

him saucily. "The nurses together with good food!" She was making fun of him to his very face, and he knew it and grinned.

"I have half a mind not to let you have any ice cream," he declared, as the maid brought in the little melon mold in its party gown of whipped cream and candied fruit and placed it before Nancy.

"You shan't have any if I don't." She put down the serving knife and spoon and looked at him, her white teeth flashing. "Together we eat it—or together we go without."

He chuckled. "By George, I hope Andy started east as soon as he got that telegram!" he exclaimed. "I bet he'll like you! But I wonder what you'll think of him."

"Oh, I'll like him." Nancy served herself to a generous portion of the frozen dainty. "I like all millionaires!"

"The deuce you do!" Her frankness rather disconcerted him. He did not want Andy Junior to be liked for his millions.

"Yes, the deuce I do!" Nancy looked straight into his eyes and laughed. "And Doctor Jensen likes all millionairesses in spite of his socialistic theories. We are business people, and we know the value of millions. Don't we, Doctor Jensen?"

XV

THE DUCHESS was not away from the hospital three days before she was back in Room Thirteen again with a bag overflowing with government reports and statistics.

"This is the only place where I can really think," she told the nurse who flew to answer her bell. "Tell Miss Yates I wish to see her at once. I mean," she corrected herself, for even the Duchess had been obliged to realize that messages of "at once" could not be answered by student nurses, "as soon as she can come."

When Nancy did come, which was not until she was off duty, she found her Duchess in bed with a coverlet of pamphlets and reports.

"Well," the Duchess regarded her from over the shell-mounted spectacles she wore in her room, "I'm back. You didn't send me any information so I came to hear what you have to tell me."

Nancy hurriedly inspected the contents of her mind. There was nothing which she had put there in the past three days which would be of special interest to the Duchess, but she offered the best she had.

"There's a funny story about old Mrs. Kozink and——"

"I don't care to hear about the Polacks," inter-

rupted the Duchess. "You know very well that I mean old Andy Macnamara. He hasn't gone home, has he?"

"He won't leave until the first of the week." Nancy had almost forgotten the Duchess' feverish interest in her King. His Majesty had made so very light of his memorandum.

"Well, well!" impatiently. "What have you learned about his cereal factory? Or his chicken feed plant?" The Duchess' eyes seemed to bore right into Nancy's brain to see for themselves what she had learned.

Nancy laughed. "I don't believe there is anything to learn. Mr. Macnamara just laughed when he heard how excited we were over his memorandum."

"You told him I had seen it?" Her gray eyes fairly snapped at Nancy.

"Of course I told him!" Nancy was indignant that the Duchess would think she had done anything else. "He had asked me to take care of it for him. He didn't tell me to show it to people. It might have been very important."

"It undoubtedly is very important. I should give a good deal to know what it means." She looked at Nancy significantly and curiously. "If I were some people, some men," she said slowly, "I should ask you to help me."

"Help you!" Nancy did not see what help she could give. She had never yet read a cipher nor untangled a business problem.

"Yes, help me," the Duchess repeated firmly. "You are in a position to pick up all sorts of information——"

She got no further than that, for Nancy interrupted her. Nancy was furious and face and voice showed it. "Just because I was careless is no reason why you should take me for a spy!" she exclaimed. "I may talk a lot, but if you notice I don't say much about any one but myself!"

"Don't lose your temper," advised the Duchess, settling her spectacles more firmly on her nose. "I didn't ask you to help me. I just told you what some people would do. I don't need anybody's help," she boasted. "I've done very well by myself. If you are going out will you please shut the door behind you?"

Nancy was ready to vow that she would shut the door behind her, and she would not open it in front of her again. Really, the Duchess was far too duchesslike.

"I suppose it is because she is alone in the world," she told Mabel Morse. She just had to find a reason for the Duchess' peculiarities, and loneliness seemed an excellent reason.

Mabel stared at her. "Who told you she was alone in the world? Don't you know about the wonderful Bertram?"

"Bertram?" Nancy had not heard a word of any Bertram.

"Her nephew."

"But no one ever comes to see her!" Nancy found

it hard to believe in a nephew who was not occasionally at the door.

"It isn't as if she were sick. And he hates hospitals,—the smell." Mabel laughed indulgently. "He says it stupefies him, and he can't run risks. The roses are from him. I suppose he gives the florist an order to send them twice a week. Sometimes they'll come for a month after she has gone home. It is a shame, for she adores him, and he isn't very decent to her. I suppose he thinks she is a queer old woman, and she is. But he's taking a big risk in neglecting her. She might leave her money to me." And she laughed again.

"Or to me," suggested Nancy, but she did not laugh. She frowned. Mabel had spoiled her picture of a lonely old woman and what had replaced it demanded a rather puzzled frown.

The elevator man brought a florist's box from the office and placed it on the desk. It was addressed to Miss Myrtice Hawks. Mabel pointed to it.

"You see. Here they are."

"Let me take them to her." Nancy forgot that she had all but vowed that she would never enter the Duchess' room again. She felt sorrier for the Duchess now that she knew that she had a nephew than she had when she had imagined her alone in the world. It must be horrid to be neglected by the apple of one's eye, and Mabel had said the Duchess adored her nephew. "It isn't right!" she told Nancy Yates firmly.

"Look!" she commanded the Duchess a moment later, and she held the long white box in front of the shell spectacles. "You certainly have an ardent admirer. Pink roses once a week spell some devotion to me."

"They spell lazy to me." The Duchess never let Nancy see how glad she was that Nancy had opened the door she had asked her to shut, and she kept her eyes on the treatise on corn which she had been reading. "I should value Bertram's flowers more if he brought them himself instead of leaving them to the florist to send."

"Bertram?" Nancy had her own reasons for wishing the Duchess to tell her about Bertram.

The Duchess put down her pamphlet, and her face brightened. After all, she was more interested in Bertram than she was in any cereal, and it was not often that she found such an appreciative listener as Nancy Yates promised to be.

"My nephew, Bertram Wadsley." Sinful pride in the possession of a nephew was in every word. "My only sister's only child."

"Does he live in Waloo?"

Yes, Bertram lived in Waloo, in a bachelor apartment up near the park with another young man. She had wanted him to live with her, but he had said it was better for young men to live together. Bertram had soft, fine, black hair and beautiful blue eyes, and he played golf and drove a purple roadster and read Galsworthy and belonged to the Civic Players and liked deep apple pie and veal hash and

hated rice in every form and musical comedies and domestic rugs. He was an architect, at least he had studied to be an architect in Waloo and New York. He had been with a camouflage corps or division in the late war. He never yet had "architected" anything, but he was always drawing little pencil plans on his cuff and always dashing east and west or south to see the building which another architect had built. Bertram sounded too selfish for words to Nancy, and when the Duchess wiped her eyes on the corner of a flimsy market report and murmured that Bert had time for every one in Waloo but his old aunt, that he never came to see her unless he was especially invited to dinner, Nancy declared that it was a shame, and that he should at least make a dinner call.

"Why, the poor old soul is starving for affection," she told Nancy Yates. "That's what is the matter with her. Selfish young brute, that Bertram! I wonder if you do have to care for some one. I thought the Duchess was satisfied with her business, and here she is breaking her heart over a selfish nephew. Maybe an acre of swamp land up near Crystal Lake isn't a satisfactory substitute for a family. It can give the Duchess the dividends she wants, but it can't give her the affection she craves. Aren't we the queer mixture? I'm glad I've decided to do without sentiment. I don't care what the King said. It will save me a lot of heartaches." And she looked at the Duchess, who seemed just one heartache.

"Do you want to see your nephew?" she asked impulsively. "If you do, you shall. You leave it to me, and he'll be here inside of twenty-four hours," she promised, much as she would have promised a child a visit from Santa Claus, although she did not regard Mr. Bertram Wadsley as any Santa Claus. Far from it.

The Duchess shook her head. She believed that the day for miracles is past.

"He hates hospitals." It almost sounded as if she were finding excuses for her only nephew. "And of course it isn't as if I were sick. I come here because it is the only place where I can think without being interrupted. People hesitate to disturb you in a hospital. But Bert hates hospitals." Her voice was firmer and her face brighter, as if she had convinced herself that Bert's hatred of hospitals was a satisfactory reason for his neglect of his aunt.

"And domestic rugs and rice and musical comedies," nodded Nancy. "I remember. But don't you bother your dear old head about that. Bertram is coming to see you—at once!" And because she felt so sorry for her she dared to put her arm around Bertram's aunt and hug her.

"I'll believe that when I see him." The Duchess thought that she knew her nephew, but she did not know Nancy, for before the day was over a black-haired, blue-eyed young man did come to the hospital and ask for Miss Hawks.

"Bertram!" Although she had been warned, the Duchess was surprised. It could not be her Ber-

tram standing in the doorway. She pushed her pamphlets away and wished that she had bought the negligee which was all lavender georgette and lace and ribbons and which was a scandalous price instead of this plain crêpe de Chine. Bertram liked pretty feminine things. He said they excused women for being women. That was why the Duchess bought as many of them as she did. She did not care a picayune for them herself. What she liked was plain blue serge and broad-toed shoes.

"How are you, Aunt Myrtice?" Bertram walked to the bed and smiled at her. "So you are here again. Getting to be a regular boarder, aren't you? You don't give any one else a chance to try old Room Thirteen. Yes, it is some time since I saw you, but I've been busy. We have a great scheme for a civic theater. Some of us have a wild hope that one of our moneyed citizens will give me a commission to build it. What are you planning now?" And he would have picked up one of her pamphlets to see for himself if she had not pushed them away.

"Never mind that! I have enjoyed your roses." She spoke stiffly, for she could recognize a hint when she heard one. Of course Bert had come to ask her to be the moneyed citizen.

Bert laughed consciously. He knew that he should see his aunt oftener, but, hang it! a fellow had so many things to do that an aunt had to be occasionally thrust into the background.

"They told you I hadn't entirely forgotten you," he said now. "I brought you a book and a box

of candy. I couldn't remember whether you ate candy when you were in retreat, but if you don't you can give it to your nurse. I hope," with eager solicitation, "you have a good nurse!"

Did he really care whether she had or not, or was he just making conversation? The Duchess could not tell, but she took the words at their face value, and she took the books and the box of candy. She never read novels, and she did not eat candy, but she never told him that.

"Got a good nurse?" he asked again, as if he just had to know what kind of a nurse she did have.

"Nurses are all more or less alike. Thank heaven I'm not sick and dependent on them, although I do see that they do their duty. Miss Loomis——"

"Loomis!" Bertram almost exploded over the name, and the Duchess wondered if possibly he could have met Miss Loomis, and if she were the reason he had come to see her. "I called up the hospital when I heard you were here to be sure it was the old trouble," he grinned, "and of course I asked for your nurse. I didn't think her name was Loomis. It sounded like—like——" He searched his brain, for his aunt refused to help him, and finally produced a name—"Bates."

"Perhaps you mean Yates?" So Nancy had made good her promise, and the Duchess owed this visit to her. She was disappointed and curious. How had Nancy managed it? "Nancy Yates, perhaps?"

"That's it." Bertram looked pleasantly expectant, as if he thought his aunt would give him

a short talk on the subject of Nancy Yates. "Isn't she your nurse?"

The Duchess smiled grimly. "She's my—stimulant."

"Eh?" That was quite beyond Bertram, and he waited for the Duchess to explain her stimulant.

But at that moment, as if she had been waiting for a cue, Nancy Yates came in, that is, her red-brown head and her voice came in.

"Oh, Miss Hawks," she began, "I must tell you——" And then she saw that Miss Hawks had company, and she stopped with a most charming display of dimples.

Bertram stumbled to his feet and looked at her eagerly. "By Godfrey!" he said to himself. "By Godfrey!"

"I beg your pardon." Nancy was rosily apologetic. "I didn't know that you had company." And she would have taken her dimples and her rosy face away from the admiring eyes of Mr. Wadsley if the Duchess had not called to her.

"Come in, Miss Yates. I should like you to meet my nephew, Mr. Wadsley." Her voice was full of pride as she spoke of her nephew.

Nancy wanted to shake the nephew, but she contented herself with murmuring, "Selfish little beast," to Nancy Yates, as she bent her head in answer to his quick "So glad to meet you, Miss Yates!" The Bertram Wadsley she saw was not at all the man the Duchess had described, and she thought how strange it must be to look at the world with the

eyes of a devoted aunt. Bertram looked to her like a careless, irresponsible young fellow and not like the ruthless world conqueror the Duchess had pictured.

"Miss Hawks told me that she has only one nephew," she said demurely, but behind the demureness there was a hint which made Bertram laugh uneasily.

"Yes," he said. "I am the only nephew. We should see more of each other, Aunt Myrtice!" he exclaimed, as if he had just made that discovery. "By Godfrey, I didn't realize how I have neglected you, but I have been a very busy man." He was not looking at his Aunt Myrtice, whom he had neglected; he was staring at Nancy Yates. She was not pretty, not a bit pretty, but she was—yes, she was amazingly attractive. And, by Godfrey, it was good of her to tip him off. Why, when she smiled, as she was smiling at Aunt Myrtice, and showed the two dimples, one on each side of her mouth, a fellow never cared whether her mouth was big or not. And her voice. It was like music, he decided, as she told a funny story about a patient in the children's ward. He chuckled. It was not half bad to drop in at the hospital to see old Aunt Myrtice. He would come again. The hospital smell was not as stupefying as he had thought. Really, it was quite exhilarating.

"The kiddies are so dear," went on Nancy. "Don't you love them, Mr. Wadsley? If we only had more room for them. We do need a children's

hospital. I suppose building hospitals doesn't run in families like red hair and a hatred for cats. If it did we shouldn't be surprised at anything your aunt does. I always bring my stories of the kiddies to your aunt," she explained to Bertram, who was looking uncomfortable and suspicious. "She is so interested in them. Aren't you?" She appealed to the Duchess, who seemed bewildered, and who could not understand why Nancy expected her to show an interest in children. Children! She never thought of children unless they were in her way. "I must run along. Your nephew has done you good," she told the Duchess. "You have the prettiest color in your cheeks. And it came from your heart, not from any little round box. Didn't it?" She asked Bertram to confirm the origin of the flush which deepened in the Duchess' face. "You should come often."

"I shall," he promised, as Nancy, with another nod, slipped out of the room. "Who is she?" he asked his aunt, striving to keep everything but polite inquiry from his voice so that it would sound as if he were saying: "If you are interested in this dimpled-faced nurse we might as well talk of her as of the weather."

"One of the student nurses." But the Duchess was not going to spend any of this rare visit talking of nurses when she wanted to hear what he was doing and where and with whom he was going. She was puzzled to know what had brought him, and her hand moved toward the bag under her pillow,

which held her check-book. Then she remembered the hint about the civic theater and drew her hand back. Instead of offering him a check she asked if his housekeeper was making him comfortable, and if he had been at the Cabot's dinner and was he still running around with that little Martha Wright?

"No," Bertram told her carelessly. "Martha is too light. I like girls who have ideas in their heads, who think of something besides their own fun. Don't you believe girls should have a definite object, work for others when they don't have to work for themselves, social service, you know, or—or nursing?"

And this from Bertram, who had always maintained that women were the butterflies of humanity and should do nothing to brush the golden dust from their shining wings. He had even found fault because the Duchess would not retire from business, although he knew that she was too old and wrinkled to make a pretty butterfly. They had had several arguments on the subject.

"I had better run along," he said hastily, as he saw embarrassing questions lurking behind the surprise in his aunt's eyes. "I'll come and see you again if you are going to stay. I like to see for myself that there isn't anything really the matter with you. Women don't usually come to a hospital unless they have to."

"Most women don't know how quiet and peaceful a hospital is."

"Let me know if there is anything I can do for you? Ask Miss Yates to call me up."

"Miss Loomis," corrected the Duchess. "Miss Yates is only a student nurse. Good-by, Bertram. Thank you for coming and I'll think of that theater as soon as I have this unraveled." Her hand touched the pamphlets. She had vowed she would make no promise about the theater, but she had never been able to refuse Bert anything. "Wait a minute. Perhaps you could use a check."

"Never mind that, Aunt Myrt. I didn't come for a check, but it would be corking if you could manage the theater. I should like to build something for the old town, and a theater would be more interesting than a children's hospital."

"Children's hospital!" She would have asked him what he meant if she had not remembered that Nancy had babbled of children and a hospital for them. Perhaps Nancy meant something. "That may be. There!" She closed his fingers over the slip of paper. "Good-by."

She watched him until the door closed behind him. What a splendid fellow he was! And how unselfish! He had never asked her for anything for himself, but for Waloo. Of course she would help him with his theater. She would like to see him build something before she died. There was that lot on Tenth Street. She had obtained it for a song and had planned to hold it until she could get an entire opera for it, but it had not developed as she had expected. Just as soon as she was through with this corn puzzle she would take up this matter with Bertram, she decided, as she reached

for a pamphlet. He was a dear boy! He had come to see her—She put down her pamphlet and stared at the window and wondered why he had come to see her. After all, a civic theater was not a very complimentary reason.

XVI

LUCK smiled on Bertram, for in the corridor he saw Nancy Yates. She was standing by the elevator talking to a tall young man in a white hospital suit, who made Bertram feel very short, in spite of his five feet and ten inches, and very blue in his well cut serge. Nancy saw him, and laughed.

"If that young man were only in the last stages of something besides selfishness he might be my prince," she said to Rolf Jensen. "He is the only nephew, you know, of several million dollars." And she smiled at the only nephew and moved toward him, while Rolf sniffed and went up in the elevator by himself.

"How did you find your aunt?" Nancy asked eagerly. "Did she say anything to you about the children's hospital? People so often don't talk of what is near their hearts. When we didn't know how much it would cost to build a hospital I dared to call you up. I knew you were an architect and could give us some sort of an estimate. Miss Hawks said a New York man built this house, but of course you were just a boy then. Did you think it very officious of me to bother you? I hope your aunt doesn't think I gave away any of her secrets?" She regarded him with a very good imitation of apology and anxiety.

"Officious!" His voice told her that she had been anything but officious. He had been quick to catch the meaning she had wished him to catch. "I think it was mighty kind. If more nurses were as thoughtful there wouldn't be so many wills broken. Aunt Myrtice can leave her money where she pleases, but I do think that our family has built its share of hospitals. Why, a hospital would take several hundred thousand and a civic theater,—it wouldn't be large, you know,—she could build it for fifty thousand. I suppose she is making a study of children's hospitals," he said discontentedly. "She was buried in pamphlets when I went in."

"Was she?" Nancy did not tell him that the pamphlets were on cereals, their uses and supply. "A civic theater would be fine. How lucky Miss Hawks is to have an architect in her family when her family is so small! You might have been a wholesale dry goods man or a retail hardware man and so of no earthly use to a woman if she wanted to build something for Waloo!" She was all admiration of his profession. "What a lot of consultations you will have to have," she suggested with a flash of her dimples.

"Of course," agreed Bertram, although he would have been puzzled to know what the consultations would be about. "And you must consult with us." He was sure of that. "Thank you for calling me up. Do you mind if I 'phone you to-morrow—to ask after my aunt?"

"Indeed you will wish to hear from her." She

kindly ignored the many days in which he had failed to show any interest in his aunt. "Yes, I shall be glad to tell you how she is." If the Duchess had been recovering from a serious operation instead of a business scheme with complications they could not have shown more anxiety in arranging communication. "And you should try to see her often. She is so alone."

"I shall." Bertram offered her an eager hand. "I shall see you—I mean Aunt Myrtice again very soon."

Nancy laughed to herself as he went down in the elevator.

"What a lot of lies you have told," she said to Nancy Yates. "You have made that young man think that the Duchess is crazy to build a children's hospital when you know very well it is a chicken feed factory which has interested her. I am ashamed of you." But she did not look ashamed. She looked satisfied, so satisfied that Rolf Jensen frowned when he met her, which he did in two minutes.

"What did you mean when you said that man might be your prince!" he asked, and there was as much contempt as curiosity in his voice.

Nancy wondered if the contempt was for her or for Bertram.

"Well, he is the only nephew of several million dollars!"

"I despise money!" he broke in fiercely.

"Oh, no, you don't," she said coolly. "You simply have a contempt for the people who have it.

Uncle Ben used to quote Sidney Smith to me—'You can know what the Lord thinks of money when you see the people he gives it to.' But I have a respect for it. Yes, I have!" as he tried to contradict her. "Haven't I just had a concrete little illustration of the lever it is? I learned that the fear of losing several hundred thousand dollars was strong enough to kill a dislike to the 'stupefying' hospital smell. Just suppose," she explained more fully as he looked puzzled, "that you had a rich old aunt, and you had neglected her shamefully. If an interfering nurse stretched the truth and called you up to ask how much it would cost auntie to build a children's hospital would you put on your hat and dash up to propose a cheap civic theater instead? I hadn't any business to say as much as I did," she confessed honestly, "but I know that nothing will make people move so fast as the fear of losing some money. A warning to the bank account is heard a lot quicker than an appeal to the heart. Oh, dear! There are times, Doctor Jensen, when I quite agree with you that money is a most loathsome product, and then I remember how little we can do if we haven't got it, and I want some of it—a lot of the loathsome product. It is the most powerful force in the world——"

"That is a debatable question. I'll admit that it is sometimes necessary." Rolf spoke feelingly. "I've been figuring on whether I have enough to take a girl to dinner and the theater." The light in his eyes told Nancy who the girl was. There was not

so much as a hint of Kitty Marrison in either of his eyes. "I have business to discuss with her," he added, as if he had to explain why neither of his eyes mentioned Kitty.

"Wouldn't the movies and a sundae do?" she asked. "Isn't she that kind of a girl?"

"I don't know." He was dubious. "She talks a lot about a fellow she calls Prince Moneybags, but possibly it is only talk. Is she the other kind of a girl?" eagerly. "Is she, Miss Yates?"

Nancy laughed softly. "Well," she drawled, pink to her ears, "if she is the girl I mean she will have so many theaters and so many wonderful dinners when she is a princess that I think in the present she would quite enjoy a movie and a sundae. There's the Duchess' bell! I suppose she wants me to express some admiration for the wonderful Bertram. I'll never forget the first time I answered her bell. I thought she was a student-nurse-eating vulture."

"What do you think now?" He walked down the corridor with her.

"I think she is just an aunt."

The Duchess had pushed her pamphlets aside and was tapping her hand with her pencil. She looked at Nancy.

"What made you decide to be a trained nurse?" was the unexpected question, for Nancy could not know that the Duchess was trying to look at her through Bertram's eyes. The Duchess had not been satisfied with her answer to the question of what had brought Bertram to the hospital and to another

question which concerned his eager promise to come again. Something he had said made her wonder if Nancy had anything to do with a more correct answer.

And with a perfectly sober face Nancy told her that nursing had seemed to her the shortest cut to her dreams, a millionaire husband, a closet full of smart clothes, a garage full of limousines and a pantry full of good eats. The Duchess sniffed at Nancy's dreams.

"Nightmares!" she declared. "You'll find you can't ride in more than one car at a time, and you can't wear more than one gown at a time, and if you eat your pantry empty you'll find yourself back in the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital as a patient. I learned that long ago."

"That doesn't help me a bit," Nancy told her quickly. "I have to do my own research work. Hearing that you have failed doesn't mean that I'll fail too."

"It never does. One generation never will learn from another." The Duchess sniffed again, louder this time, because Nancy would not accept any of her experience but insisted on buying her own.

"Are you engaged to be married?" she asked next, her gray eyes boring right into Nancy's most secret thoughts. She had paid scant attention to Nancy's dream of a millionaire husband. She knew that all girls dream of marrying millionaires before they wed workingmen.

Nancy sighed and frowned and said she didn't

know. The Duchess looked both surprised and disgusted.

"Surely you know whether you are engaged or not! I haven't any use for a girl who plays fast and loose with men."

"Neither have I!" exclaimed Nancy from the bottom of her heart, and she told the truth. She had absolutely no use for a girl who said one thing and did another.

"Then what do you mean?" demanded the Duchess. "I am not asking out of idle curiosity. I have a reason for wishing to know."

Behind her sober face Nancy laughed. She was almost sure that she could name the Duchess' reason, and she obligingly told her what she meant.

"I decided when I was a baby that I would marry a prince. I adored fairy tales, you know, and I wanted to be a princess. My hero had to be rich as well as royal, and I called him Prince Moneybags. I never changed my mind, the idea has worn awfully well, and so I suppose I may consider myself engaged to my royal millionaire."

"Humph!" It was plain that the Duchess thought that Nancy's explanation was the sheerest nonsense. She frowned and asked sharply: "Did you see Bertram as he went out? Did he tell you when he was coming again?"

"He said something about to-morrow. He seems awfully interested in hospitals—children's hospitals. We were talking about them in the corridor. I suppose he hopes to build one some day. If I were

you," she suggested eagerly, "I should talk to him about hospitals instead of corn. An architect can't be expected to take any interest in corn."

"I should never think of talking to Bert about corn. I am not interested in corn myself any more. I have another idea. Does this belong to you?" She showed Nancy a small black book.

Nancy took it from her and fluttered the pages. "It's father's 'line a day,' " she said in surprise. "It must have fallen from my pocket."

The Duchess opened her mouth to say something about the "line a day" book and then changed her mind. "You might as well know that I read it," she confessed after a moment. "I had to read it to know whose it was."

"I am glad you did. Now you know how splendid and unselfish and clever and wasted my father was. He never had a chance or he would have been known all over the world. I am not the best kind of an advertisement for him," she admitted ruefully. "But I adored him. And it hurt me dreadfully to know how little he got out of his life. But he was tied to Mifflin, and he couldn't get away. That is why I've made up my mind to be tied to nothing less than a million."

"Humph!" the Duchess grunted again. "You'll tie yourself to the first whipper-snapper who comes along with a pink rope in his hand."

"I will not!" Nancy's voice was very firm, and Nancy's cheeks were very red as she said what she

would not do. "I have made my plans. And they don't include any young whipper-snapper."

The Duchess could remember a time, old as she was, when she had made rash statements and defied Fate.

"I suppose you think you know," she muttered.

"I know I know!" insisted Nancy, her head very much in the air.

And for the third time in five minutes the Duchess said: "Humph!"

XVII

NANCY YATES stood on the corner and waited for a street car to come along and take her downtown. It was the first day that one felt that Spring had really come for her annual visit after a series of niggardly calls, and Nancy noted with pleasure that the trees were budding, the grass greening and the birds twittering. She felt like twittering herself, as she stood there in her blue serge suit, her little black hat and veil, she was so glad that the winter was over. She had never worked so hard in her life, but she had to admit that she had never felt better. She was glad that Spring had come, and as she stood there in the sunshine, she wondered what would happen before Spring yielded the best guest room in old Year's mansion to Summer and retired to one of the rear apartments, for her bones told her that something would happen. An entire season could not possibly slip by without something happening.

She looked up the street and frowned because there was not a car to be seen. Nancy did not take kindly to waiting, and she tapped the pavement impatiently with her black oxford. When one has only a very short time to spend one hates to give many minutes to a street car. She jumped as a

small automobile darted around the corner and drew up at the curb beside her with a merry sputter.

"If you are going downtown I can take you as well as a street car—and cheaper," offered Rolf Jensen, smiling at her from behind the wheel.

"The rules for student nurses don't say a single word about riding with internes," frowned Nancy, as if she lived and breathed by the rigid rules for the student nurses. "But when in doubt I find it best to do——" and she slipped in beside him and patted the side of the car. "Nice little motor. I've already spent too many of my precious minutes on this corner. I don't care how fast you drive."

"You must have a lot of money to spend." He laughed at the eager impatience in her voice.

"I have exactly ten dollars a month, as you know. It is quite useless to try to make you think I have a thousand. I'm only going to leave my watch,—the crystal is broken,—and then I'm going up the avenue to stare in the windows and choose what I should buy if I had the thousand. No, I'm not in a hurry because I have so much money to spend, but I wish to get downtown at once just because I have started. I am wild to finish things as soon as I begin them. The Duchess told me yesterday that impatience is the curse of this generation, and if she is right I have been especially deviled. But I can't help it. Something inside of me keeps calling: 'Do this right away, Nancy Yates! Don't wait a second!' Isn't it wonderful to be out of the hospital this gorgeous day? Sometimes I feel that

I am too cramped; bounded on the north by Miss Bidnell, and on the east by Miss Maguire, and on the south by all the hospital rules, and on the west by fussy Doctor Foss. And just smell something besides the hospital!" And she sniffed, with eager nostrils, the sweet fresh breath of Spring.

Rolf laughed again. What a child she was in her enjoyment of nothing at all. "I say," he said quickly, as if he feared that Nancy might jump from the car before he could put in words the thought that his brain had just whispered to him, "it is a gorgeous day! Can't we do something to celebrate it? Shall we go to the Waloo for tea?"

"We shall!" exclaimed Nancy joyfully. "And I hope Miss Bidnell will be at the next table. Then she can tell me if I have broken another rule. I never knew there could be as many rules as there are at the Geoffrey Williston Hawks Hospital training school. And Miss Bidnell knows them all!" She was amazed that any one could know the long row of rules.

They did not find Miss Bidnell at the Waloo, but they did meet a young man who rushed up to Nancy Yates with such frantic haste that he jostled two elderly women and stepped on one Pekinese.

"Why, Nancy Yates!" He could not believe that she was Nancy Yates.

"Why, George Yardley!" The color fairly leaped into Nancy's cheeks, and she held out a cordial hand. "Are the bankers having another con-

vention? How is Mifflin and your little old gas-engine?"

"Darned lonesome!" George held her hand as if it were diamonds and pearls and rubies. "But, Nance, I thought you were studying medicine? Do you take one of your classes here?" He looked with jealous eyes at Rolf Jensen as if he thought that Rolf was her class instructor.

"Goose!" She crinkled her nose. "I am glad to take one of my meals here. You would be glad, too, if you were eating at a nurses' home."

"You bet I would be glad!" And he tore his eyes from Nancy to turn them on Rolf with a request which Rolf could not refuse.

Rolf had looked around quickly when he heard Nancy exclaim: "Why, George Yardley!" He had heard the name before. The first day she was in the hospital Nancy had said that she was afraid of snapping, snarling women and if the hospital had no other kind of patients she would go back to Mifflin and marry George Yardley. And here was George Yardley looking at Nancy as if she were the only girl at the Waloo, when, as a matter of fact, there were dozens of girls there that afternoon and all of them prettier than Nancy Yates. Rolf looked at George and decided at once that he was not at all the man for Nancy, but he kindly invited him to join them. He could not very well do anything else, and a minute later Nancy and the two men were seated at a table in the Viking room.

"This is the life!" murmured Nancy happily.

She liked the Viking room and the throng of people, who seemed to have caught a bit of holiday spirit from Spring, for faces were smiling and eyes were sparkling all over the large tea room. Kitty Marrison was at a table beyond them with a group of friends. Nancy nodded to her rather pointedly. She was glad to have Kitty see her there with Rolf and George—especially with Rolf. "There is your princess," she said in a low voice, calling Rolf's attention to Kitty's efforts to speak to him.

"So she is." And Rolf jumped up and went over to speak to Kitty.

"Dear me," Nancy murmured to Nancy Yates. "I didn't know that he was quite so crazy about her as that! H-m!" She was thoughtful for quite sixty seconds, and she never said a word in answer to George's joyful exclamations until her host returned. She looked up at him and said with a quaint formality: "It was very kind of you, Doctor Jensen, to bring me here this afternoon."

"It was extremely kind of you, Doctor Jensen, to include me in your party," mimicked George. "Now, then, Nancy Yates, what deviltry have you been up to? How many millionaires have you bagged?" If he expected to embarrass her by asking about the hunting before Rolf Jensen he was disappointed for Nancy only smiled ruefully.

"It seems to have been a closed season for millionaires since I have been at the hospital," she mourned but her eyes danced. "I haven't had even a glimpse of a multi'. But I am not discouraged, not

a single solitary bit. How are Doris and Uncle Ben and old Mrs. Martin and Buster and the Jenkins' baby and Judge Macomber and Sadie Smith and——"

"Help!" George raised a protesting hand. "And don't call the roll of Mifflin. I have a copy of the *Gazette* in my pocket, and I'll give it to you. It does seem good to see you again! There doesn't seem to be any one in Mifflin now that you are here!" He leaned across the table to tell her this, and Rolf Jensen would have gone back to Kitty Marrison if he had not been giving the party.

"There's Doris!" Nancy told George quickly, and Rolf grinned. He liked to hear Nancy remind George of other girls.

"Doris is a dear little girl, but she isn't Nancy Yates." George meant the words to be loud enough for only Nancy to hear, but Rolf had sharp ears, and he caught them too.

"Lucky she isn't," declared Nancy. "Doris is a raving beauty. She wouldn't be like me for a second. You must go and see her as soon as you get home and tell her about my new hat. I think myself it is quite a bonnet."

George thought it was quite a bonnet, too, and his admiration was so warm and inclusive, that Rolf must have felt very much out in the cold. He should have been glad that he had tea and sandwiches to entertain him.

He did not mind being out in the cold for a few minutes. He was glad of the opportunity to ob-

serve and study this queer, tantalizing Nancy Yates. He had discovered long ago that she was not like any other student in the nurses' training school. She was not like any girl he knew, and he watched her as she chattered with George and tried to learn what made her different. He wondered if it was her honesty or if it was her intense joy of every phase of life, which Nancy herself called selfishness, but which Rolf considered absolute unselfishness.

"She may think of herself first but she thinks of the other fellow last and longest," he thought, as he watched the lovely color come and go in her face and caught the sparkle in her eyes.

Rolf was not the only man who watched Nancy's expressive face. At a table in the corner were two young men whose attention was attracted by the low laugh which their ears heard.

"Hello!" exclaimed one of them. "I know that chuckle. Where is she?"

"There she is, the one with the red-brown hair and the two men! Look at her eyes!"

"Look at her dimples! By thunder——" he pushed back his chair and rose to his feet. "I know her!"

"So do I. I'm going to speak to her!"

But before Dan Darvin could rise, Bertram Wadsley was standing beside Nancy and begging for the latest news from his aunt.

"I am so glad to have an opportunity to inquire for Aunt Myrtice—Miss Hawks, you know." For Nancy brought back so suddenly from Mifflin was

ooking at him as if she did not know that he had .n aunt.

"Oh, yes. She was well and happy at five o'clock ast night. I haven't seen her since. She was curi- ›usly interested then in rosewater and benzoin. She ounded like a hand lotion. Your aunt is a won- lerful business woman, Mr. Wadsley," she told ıim solemnly, and as he seemed disposed to linger .nd talk about his aunt, she introduced him to Rolf .nd George. She had to introduce Dan Darvin also vhen at last he joined them to ask her if she knew vhy his Aunt Ethel had never had another dinner ›arty.

There was an interchange of a few sentences and hen, as they were not invited to stay, Mr. Wads- ey and Mr. Darvin reluctantly went away. George ılanced at Nancy and frowned.

"So you have met him!" he said crossly, and as Nancy stared at him questioningly he added ex- ›losively: "Your Moneybags chap! You know that Wadsley is the nephew of old Miss Hawks, who ıas as many millions as she has fingers."

Nancy shook her head. "I know, but he is too ıealthy. I haven't any use for a perfectly healthy ıeir to millions. Oh, dear! It is never that late!" For she heard a man behind her tell his friend that t was half-past six. She turned to Rolf: "What ıappens to a student nurse if she is tardy on night luty?"

"You shan't be tardy," he promised.

"When am I going to see you again, Nance?"

grumbled George, as she gathered her gloves and bag in her hand. "I have to take the midnight train, but we could get together for a while this evening."

"Not unless you are knocked down by a motor car and brought into my ward. I am on night duty, you know. Thank heaven, I go off to-morrow and live like a normal woman again. But you see, Georgie, it's impossible for us to get together to-night. I'm awfully glad we met and that Doctor Jensen invited you to his party. Give my love to every one in Mifflin."

"Can't you give me some of your love?" he begged eagerly.

But she only shook her head and hurried to the little car which Rolf had brought to the curb.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Rolf asked as they drove away.

"I know. I never had my watch mended. What shall I do? Who ever heard of a nurse without a watch!"

"I didn't mean your watch."

Nancy refused to understand what he might mean if he did not refer to her watch, and she asked him gravely about one of her patients. The conversation was strictly professional until they reached the hospital.

"You are a dangerous woman!" Rolf said, with a grin, as he helped her from the car.

"I am not!" Nancy contradicted him flatly for she felt that she knew Nancy Yates better than

he did. "I am just a poor working girl who has to look out for herself.' Her eyes crinkled, and she made a little curtsey to him, as if she introduced him to the poor working girl, before she turned and ran up the steps.

It was the quiet hour when all of the patients were settled for the night, and Nancy, in her crisp uniform again, was looking over her charts, when Rolf Jensen slipped in quite like a ghost in his white suit.

"Here's a watch for you." He put his own time-keeper on the desk. "I've borrowed one from Lawson. You may feel more comfortable to have one with you to-night."

"That's very kind and thoughtful!" She would feel a lot more comfortable to have a watch with which to count the hours and the pulses. "Didn't we have a good time this afternoon? I hope you didn't mind asking George? He is such an old friend of mine!"

"Only a friend?" Rolf had not meant to ask any question like that. He had meant to give Nancy the watch and leave the ward at once, but the words ran across his lips before he knew that they were formed. He fumbled with the charts as if Nancy's answer, whatever it would be, was not of any particular interest to him.

Nancy opened her eyes. "Of course he is only a friend. Why, he is only the assistant teller in the Mifflin Bank!" She was surprised that he should think that the assistant teller in a small town bank

could be anything but a friend to her. "He isn't rich enough for me, any more than his sister, if he had a sister, would be rich enough for you. You must remember that our slogan is—'The Moneybags for us'!"

He stopped fumbling with her charts and laughed. But you cannot have a long conversation in a hospital ward with any nurse without being interrupted, and Nancy had to go and draw the screen closer around a patient who was abnormally sensitive to drafts. When Nancy returned Rolf had gone, and Miss Bidnell, tall and stiff as if just freshly starched, stood in his place.

"Was that Doctor Jensen who went out?" Her voice seemed freshly starched also.

"Yes." Nancy's eyes were innocent and wondering as she raised them to her superintendent.

"You know the rules in regard to nurses and internes," went on Miss Bidnell. "I told you——"

"He came to bring me a watch." Nancy was so indignant that she never waited for Miss Bidnell to finish her sentence and put a period to what she had told Nancy. "Mine is broken. Don't you think it is more important for me to be able to take a pulse than to remember a silly rule?"

"How did he know that your watch was broken?" Miss Bidnell knew better than to discuss the wisdom of the rules with her students.

"Oh, help!" murmured Nancy. "If you didn't have so many moldy old rules, Miss Bidnell, it wouldn't be half as exciting for the nurses and the

ctors. I beg your pardon," she had the grace say when she remembered that she was talking her superintendent. "But you know yourself that doctor is like a cooky jar. If you will put him the top shelf in the pantry the nurses just have stop and look at him. It is such a silly old rule. a nurse wants to philander with an interne all e rules in the world won't stop her."

"What will?" Miss Bidnell really seemed to nt to know. She was far more curious than she is sarcastic.

"Common sense," Nancy told her flatly. "And u needn't worry about me!" As if Miss Bidnell d been losing any sleep on account of Nancy tes. "I wouldn't marry a doctor, not if he was last man on earth! I don't know how the other s feel, but I know too much of what it means e a doctor's wife. I should say I did!" she warmly before she went to answer an impatient of "Nurse! Nurse!"

XVIII

"I DON'T know what the new night nurse will be like," grumbled Miss Ethelwynne Myers the next morning. Miss Myers had occupied the bed in the sunniest corner of the ward for three years, and there was every possibility that she would continue to occupy it for as long as she lived. "But I'm sure she won't know how I like my pillows nor that I have to have my back rubbed at a quarter of two every night. You don't have to be told any more, Miss Yates, because you know I wake up at half-past one every night, and if my back ain't rubbed right away I don't get no more sleep. I'll have to make the new nurse understand that. She'll think it's just a notion, and it ain't. I'm going to miss you, Miss Yates, especially at a quarter to two every night. You've been kind and considerate of us, and that's why I asked you to get me a drink last night when that pussy cat, Miss Bidnell, was scolding you for talking to Doctor Jensen. I guess she never had no love affairs. But I ain't forgot what it meant to whisper and giggle with a man. You don't need to worry a mite, Miss Yates, I'll always help you. And I don't want no thanks for it, neither."

"Then I shan't give you any." Nancy's cheeks were scarlet when her ears told her that little Miss

Myers had heard her talk to Rolf Jensen and had heard Miss Bidnell talk to Nancy Yates. She had said nothing to Rolf that every one in the ward, every one in the hospital, might not have heard, but Miss Myers was putting two and two together and getting a result which was not fair to Doctor Jensen nor to her. Suddenly she laughed. It was ridiculous to think of Rolf Jensen as a man for any girl —any girl but one like Kitty Marrison. "I'm glad you are going to miss me," she smiled down at the thin fretful face, "for I'm going to miss you."

"Well, I can't tell how I'll miss you until I know what kind of a rubber the new nurse will be." Miss Myers was a cautious soul and took few risks. "Maybe she'll be better than you, but anyway, I hope you'll keep on bringing us flowers and ice cream. They help to pass the time. And books. And magazines and papers. Only I like my magazines and papers just as fresh as other folks'."

"Of course you do. And I'll remember. I'll be popping in and out, you know, and you can tell me if there is anything you want. How strange it will seem to be up all day. I don't suppose I shall sleep a wink to-night."

"No more will I, not until I get the new nurse trained," sighed Miss Myers. "Seems as if we have to put up with a lot here."

It did seem strange to Nancy not to go to bed that morning after she went off night duty. She had the day to herself and she had planned to spend it with two of her college friends. They were go-

ing to lunch at the smartest restaurant, attend a matinée, and then Nancy was to dine with Mollie Barton. For eight hours she was going to forget that there was such an institution as a hospital in all of Waloo. But before she left she would run in and say good-by to the King and speak to the Duchess.

The King was sitting in his big chair, dressed, ready to leave, all but his hat, and he held that in his hand.

"I'm going home," he said with gruff impatience. "I'm just waiting for that fool doctor to sign my release. Makes me think I'm in jail. It's tomfool nonsense that a man can't go home until some papers have been signed."

"That's splendid!" Nancy meant his departure, not the necessary unwinding of hospital red tape. "You have done wonderfully, haven't you? And you've been such a splendid patient. But I expect you are glad to go home."

"Huh!" grunted the King. "Home isn't much now, just a big pile of marble filled with hired help. I did hope the boy would come before I left, but, say—" he reached out his hand and caught her sleeve—"I want you to promise not to tie yourself up to any one until you have seen Andy. He's on his way home, and I want you to give him a chance."

"I thought he wired you that he couldn't come, that he didn't know anything about corn?" Nancy had been kept informed in regard to the King's communications with his grandson, and she was all big

eyes now to hear that His Majesty wanted her to give his heir apparent a chance.

"And I told him he could learn in Waloo, that I'd teach him. There's more than one way to bring a grandson to time." The King nodded his bullet head knowingly. "And I want you to see Andy. I like you, Nancy Yates," he said without any beating about the bush. "I haven't much use for most girls, silly, giggling fools, never know what they want and never satisfied. But you, you're like a man. You've made up your mind what you want, and you're going after it. You've got imagination and perseverance and initiative." They sounded invaluable as the King enumerated them. "Things a man has to have to succeed. And you've got something else—I don't know what it is, but it's something that makes a sick old man feel that he isn't as alone in the world as he thought he was. That's why I'd like you in my family. By thunder, if I wasn't so old myself!" He shook his head again and looked at her.

She felt so sorry for him that she was all ready to exclaim that he was not too old, that he was King Moneybags, and she would be glad to be a daughter to him. That was all a rich old man had a right to expect, a devoted, loving and patient daughter. She patted his wrinkled hand.

He sighed and went on: "You'll be good for Andy, and he won't be bad for you. He can give you everything a girl could want. And he isn't the worst fellow in the world. Not by a darned sight!" he assured her.

"Of course he isn't," agreed Nancy, who knew absolutely nothing about young Andy Macnamara except what his grandfather had told her. "But you know, Mr. Macnamara, I've put a big value on myself. I can't marry just a rich man. I should never be satisfied to be the wife of the grandson of a moneymaker." And she would have told him what she was looking for in her first husband, but he would not let her explain. He had things to say himself.

"I know you wouldn't. But I've fixed that, at least I'm going to fix it as soon as Andy gets here. I know you are ambitious." He paused to give her an opportunity to tell him her ambitions, but she said never a word, and just stood there staring at him with fascinated eyes. He had jumped to some conclusion and went on sputteringly to explain where he had landed. "I've got the plans made. All you have to do is to hold back and keep yourself free. Never mind what Myrtice Hawks tells you about that nincompoop she calls her nephew. Don't go and tie yourself up to him until you've seen Andy. Is that the doctor with my release? I've been sitting here waiting for nearly an hour. No sense in hanging around a place when you're through with it, and I'm through with everything here but you, my dear. Huh, at last!" For a nurse entered with the required permit, which the King read, holding the paper at arm's length. "H-m. It seems all right. We'll go now while we can. No, I don't need any help!" And, indeed, he did not. He stood

firm and solid on his two feet. "Good-by, my dear. Don't forget what I've said. I'll let you know when Andy comes. I want you to get together."

"Good-by, Mr. Macnamara. I'm very glad to have met you." Her demure face, broken by her dimples, reminded him of the night when she had met him, and his face broke into a smile, too.

"Gosh, that was funny, my climbing down the fire-escape, scaring you to death. You were a good little sport, and I'm not going to forget you. You're in my mind," he promised, and it sounded as if fortune and favors were waiting for the girl who was in the mind of rich old Andy Macnamara. "You and Andy. Good-by." He raised his head and touched his lips to her pink cheek. "No offense," he nuttered. "Just a token of appreciation." And he ramped out, followed by the nurse and an orderly arrying his bag.

Nancy's fingers flew to her cheeks, and an amused ıile twisted the corners of her lips. "Poor old ın!" she told Nancy Yates. "Imagine going me to a pile of marble filled with hired help. Is :t what it means to be rich?" She had never ught that it might mean that, that riches could ıynonymous with loneliness. "Rich people don't home to take care of each other. They run y to spend their money on change and play, and hen one of the family is ill there is no one at :." Nancy shook her head. She did not like view of the rich. "I must go and see the

Duchess, she is one of the lonely rich, too," she said.

She found the Duchess ready to go home also. The pamphlets and reports were tossed on the floor and in the waste basket, for the Duchess was through with them. But she was not through with schemes, for she was making hurried notes in her big book.

"I'm glad you came in," she said. "I'm going home. I have everything all straight at last. It took longer than usual, but it's a better plan than I started with and will pay immense dividends. Bert will be able to build his civic theater himself. You just wait and see. And I've been thinking of what you said about that prince, and I think you are right. You haven't any business to marry a poor man. I want to give you the refusal of my nephew. Yes!" as Nancy's eyes popped open, her mouth, too. "That's what I want to do. I'm not satisfied with the way Bert lives. He would be better with a home of his own and some one to look after him. I should feel perfectly safe if you would do it. A trained nurse would be equal to any emergency. And you are more than a trained nurse. I've looked you up, and I've found that you have family and education and a something—I don't know just what it is, but it makes me feel perfectly safe to let you have Bert. I want him to have the things you say you want. I can furnish the money, but money isn't everything. If we work together——" She paused expressively and waited for Nancy to say, "Yes, and thank you kindly."

But Nancy never said a word. Surprise tied her tongue. She just stood and stared with big eyes at the Duchess. Together! That was the word the Duchess had used. The Duchess,—not even with all of her money,—could never give her heir the well rounded life she wished him to have without the co-operation of church-mouse-poor Nancy Yates. Neither could the King. Suddenly Nancy laughed. It was so droll to be offered a choice of princes in one morning. How odd patients—human beings—were!

"That is very kind, Miss Hawks," she said no more gratefully than if the Duchess had asked her to drop in some day for lunch. "But you know my hero——"

But the Duchess, like the King, would not let her enumerate the specifications for her hero.

"That will be all right," she said quickly. "Everything shall be entirely satisfactory. This new scheme is all for Bert—and for you," she added tardily. "It is far better than anything that can be made from corn. Old Andy Macnamara can have his breakfast food factory or his chicken feed plant. I suppose he will try to interest you in his grandson, but don't listen to him, my dear. You just tell him firmly that you have other plans. And you have! You don't need to worry another minute. Your future is in my hands now."

"Oh, is it?" Nancy asked Nancy Yates, but she did not say it to the Duchess. She just looked mildly interested in what the Duchess had to offer. As a

business woman, who has ordered her life on a practical basis, she could do no less.

"I want you to come to dinner some night soon and meet Bert in a home. The background will be different from a hospital. Bert fits very well into a home. And he wants to see you. He has complained that he hasn't had a word with you the last few times he has been here. You'll come to dinner?"

"Yes, I'll come." It was the practical business woman who gravely accepted the invitation, as she would have accepted an opportunity to look over any investment she was considering. "I shouldn't buy a rug for my library nor a floor lamp for my living room without first seeing it in the house, so I'll come and look at your nephew in his home." It required quite an effort for her to keep her face straight as she made the promise, for behind her sober mouth she was all chuckles. Life was proving amazingly amusing to a girl who knew exactly what she wanted.

"Then that's all right!" The Duchess drew a deep sigh of relief. "I don't expect to be back here for some time. This new scheme will keep me busy, for it is along a different line from anything I have taken up. What a smart man your father was, my dear." Nancy stared at her. Why should the Duchess speak of her father? She supposed that her own cleverness formed the link association. "But a poor business man. I discovered several fortunes in that little book you loaned me, but he didn't develop one of them. Just as well for me and Bert that he didn't. You would never have come here and

called me names if he had left you a fortune. I am glad to have things settled. I've been afraid that one of those short-haired Bohemians would marry Bert, and I don't approve of the way they live. They wouldn't let Bert have even a wedding. Did you say the car was waiting? Quite time, too. Good-by. I'll telephone to you as soon as I've arranged a night with Bert. I should miss you if I weren't going to be so busy, but you are quite right to ask a man to stand on his own feet. If you don't look after yourself other people will cheat you. I'm glad I spoke to you. Old Andy Macnamara is going to talk to you, too. I discovered that when he came in to see me yesterday. But don't listen to him. I can do as much for you as he can, and you'll have Bert in addition. I can do more because I'm a woman and understand better what a woman wants! Good-by!"

She bustled away, leaving Nancy bewildered by the torrent of words which sounded as if her future was indeed settled and Nancy was the promised bride of Bertram Wadsley. A paper had fallen from the Duchess' overflowing bag, and Nancy mechanically picked it up. She glanced at it to see if it was anything worth returning. There was but one word on it, but that word was repeated many times. "Rosewater," it said in a large scrawl and also in a fine scribble.

"Crazy! Absolutely crazy!" Nancy told Nancy Yates, as she crumpled the paper and tossed it into

the basket. "Both of them, the King with his corn, and the Duchess with her rosewater. When so many millionaires are being offered to you, Nancy Yates," she laughed, "it is too bad that one of them hasn't an incurable disease."

XIX

"AND now I'm going to take off my uniform and put on a pink satin evening gown and pink silk stockings and pink satin slippers, because Miss Bidnell has been soft-hearted enough to tell me that I may go to Mollie Barton's dinner dance if I will be home by twelve o'clock. I'm going to play Cinderella for one night." Nancy all but smacked her lips when she spoke of her pink satin evening gown and her pink silk stockings, and when she mentioned Cinderella her brown eyes fairly danced.

"Pink satin!" exclaimed Miss Myers. "My goodness, I wish I could see you in it! I ain't ever seen you in anything but this white cap and apron and blue and white striped gingham." The white cap and apron and the blue and white gingham were worse than rags to hear Miss Ethelwynne Myers speak of them. "Don't you suppose you could slip in here for a minute when you're all dressed up?" she suggested eagerly. "It would be a treat for the whole ward."

"Suppose Miss Bidnell or Miss Maguire or Doctor Rodger," Nancy named the sternest, the crossest doctor on the hospital staff, "should catch me? I should die!"

"It would be a treat to them, too," insisted Miss Myers. "Please do, Miss Yates. It would give

me something pleasant to think about to-night when I can't sleep. I'll bet you look like an angel in pink satin! When I was a girl red heads didn't wear pink of any kind."

Nancy laughed. "I do. I most certainly do look like the most beautiful angel who ever played a harp. If I have time, Miss Myers, I shall run in a minute. It is my duty to come if the sight of me in my glad rags will give you a more comfortable night."

An hour later when she slipped back to the ward and dropped the long coat which was to masquerade as an evening wrap, Miss Myers gasped with admiration, and Mrs. Melusky in the next bed opened her eyes wide, and from the end of the ward Mrs. Flynn called eagerly for Nancy to come to her and let her feel the quality of the satin.

"I used to be a dressmaker, and I know good satin when I feel it," she exclaimed proudly. "My, Miss Yates," she said, when Nancy stood beside her so that she could take a fold of the satin between her work-worn fingers, "that never cost a cent less than six dollars a yard. It's real becoming, too, although I'd never have made such a skimpy skirt for you. I'd give your legs room to move easy. There ain't many yards in women's clothes now, is there? You do look good and clean," she condescended to murmur. "I hope you have a good time."

All of the beds wished that Nancy would have a good time. They were still wishing it and talking of the good times they had had when they were as

young as Nancy and went to parties, when there was a step in the corridor. It stopped at the door.

"If that is Miss Bidnell," Nancy turned swiftly to Miss Myers, "I'll die right here and now, slain by the scorn of her contemptuous eye."

She caught up her coat to cover her magnificence, but before she could put it on, Rolf Jensen came in with medicine for Mrs. Melusky. He stopped suddenly and stared. A laughing girl in a pink evening frock, her arms and neck bare, her feet twinkling in satin slippers, was just the very last thing he expected to see in that ward. He never had seen such a pink vision in any hospital ward, and he caught his breath quickly, and his heart missed a beat.

"Don't you say a word!" Miss Myers ordered shrilly, and she caught Nancy's fingers and held them tightly, as if she would protect Nancy against any number of surprised young doctors. "I asked—I begged—her to come and show us how she looked in her party dress! So it's nobody's fault but mine. You shan't scold her! You can scold me!"

"I shan't scold any one," promised Rolf, when he had regained breath enough to speak. "I am too dazzled. My word, but that's a pretty outfit!"

"It's a pretty girl!" corrected Miss Myers, jealous of the admiration he was giving the gown when there was a pink-cheeked dimpled girl in it.

"While you argue that question I'll go to my party." Nancy drew the coat about her shoulders. "Good-by, friends. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow."

She was gone in a flash. The ward seemed strangely empty and forlorn. There was a long sigh from each of the twelve cots.

"Don't you wish you were going with her?" Miss Myers asked Rolf, who stood rather open-mouthed as he stared down the corridor which had swallowed Nancy. "I hope she has a good dinner! I hope she dances holes in those pink stockings! And I hope she meets that prince fellow she talks about! But if she does I don't know what we folks will do without her! There ain't many nurses like Miss Yates, even if she ain't got her diploma yet. She says she's selfish and lazy!" Miss Myers sneered at Nancy's description of herself. "But if she is give me a selfish and lazy nurse. That's what I say!"

"I say so, too!" It was a ward chorus.

"She is like that Cinderella, ain't she?" went on Miss Myers, who was in a chatty mood, "going to a party and having to come home at twelve. My, I hope for her own sake she does meet that prince fellow! You've heard her talk about him? Law, law, what it would be to be young and thinking of princes again! I used to be just like Miss Yates, all for romance. That was why I couldn't ever see Sam Lackey. He wasn't nothing but a mechanic, and I wouldn't listen to him. If I had I guess now I'd be up there in Rich Man's Alley, as you call it, with my private bath and my private sun porch and half a dozen nurses instead of down here in a free bed. Girls are such fools! If a man's got a hand-

some face and a smooth tongue they don't look to see what kind of hands he has nor if he has any brains at all. I know! I was always looking for a hero. I didn't want no good working man. And see where I am now!"

"Have you told Miss Yates that?" Rolf meant to express only courteous interest, but there was an eager curiosity in his voice which made Miss Myers look at him sharply.

"No, I ain't talked to her about that, but maybe I will if the time ever comes. But, law, she won't listen to me! I wouldn't listen to folks when they told me I was a fool because I wouldn't marry a man who couldn't keep his hands clean. How was I to know Sam Lackey'd ever invent part of an automobile and make a fortune for himself? Girls ain't got ears to hear them kind of things. I know! But you can see how looking for romance just spoiled my life. I hope Miss Yates'll learn a lesson from me when the time comes, but she won't. She'll be just like me!"

Rolf looked at the thin white face. It did not seem possible that it ever had been young and gay. What a pity girls had to grow old and exchange their rosy anticipations for gray realizations. He wondered what Nancy Yates would be like when she was old, and then he shrugged his shoulders. He would never know, for Nancy Yates would find her prince and pass out of his life. There would be no place in Nancy's future for a struggling young doctor, a struggling young anybody. There was something

about Nancy which told him that she would get what she wanted, and if she wanted a prince—— He frowned and handed the medicine for Mrs. Melusky to Lydia Peterson, who was on duty, and walked impatiently away.

Miss Myers looked after him, and she thought she could read what was in his mind as easily as she could read the magazine which Nancy brought her.

"Doctors," she said scornfully to no one in particular, "don't know all there is in the world. Maybe they can count the bones you got under your skin, but there's mighty few of them that know women's got eyes in their hearts as well as their heads. And it's lucky for the men that what they see with their hearts means more to the most of them than what they see with their heads. But it would be better for women in the long run, Mrs. Melusky, if God Almighty hadn't made them that way!"

XX

It was a week after the Duchess left the hospital before she called Nancy to the telephone and told her that Bertram had no engagement for that evening and that he would dine with them if Nancy would keep her promise. She would send the car for Nancy at six o'clock precisely, and Nancy was to be ready, for the Duchess' chauffeur did not like to wait for any one.

Nancy laughed as she hung up the receiver. She did not care whether she ever saw Mr. Bertram Wadsley in a home, although the Duchess had told her that he appeared very well in one, but she was sorry for the Duchess. It must be forlorn to have nothing to love but Bertram Wadsley. Nancy recalled a talk she had had with Bertram one day as he was leaving the hospital. He had stopped to tell her that he had been to see his aunt, and he told her also of a generous gift his aunt had given him. Nancy had frowned, and before she had thought she had impulsively asked him if he were not ashamed to accept it. Bertram had looked as if she had slapped him.

"Why shouldn't I take it?" he had demanded in indignant surprise.

"Because you haven't earned it! Don't misunderstand me. I think it's all right for you to take her

money. Sure, I do, for I'm something of a robber myself, but I always give something in return."

"I guess you don't know what it is to be a rising young architect in Waloo," Bertram had offered as an excuse, and he laughed scornfully because Nancy seemed to think that a rising young architect in Waloo could give Miss Myrtice Hawks anything.

"I should hate to think that it meant charging an aunt so much a call, like a doctor—no, a plumber! Your rates are far too high for any doctor!"

Bertram had stared at her, and his face had reddened angrily. "I don't know just what business it is of yours," he began stiffly.

She interrupted him to tell him frankly that it was none of her business. She knew that as well as he did. "Your aunt isn't even my patient. But she is rather a dear in her peculiar way, and she is so frightfully alone. When there are only two of you I should think you could be more decent to her. She would do anything in the world for you!" she declared, as if that was a reason why Bertram should be more attentive to his aunt. Perhaps she thought that was the reason which would appeal to him.

"Yes, I suppose she would," he admitted sullenly, and he looked at her curiously, for no girl had ever scolded him for not calling on his Aunt Myrtice oftener. Other girls had been more interested in his calls on them. "I'll think of it," he said slowly. "If it will please you——"

"It will," she said quickly. "And it will please Miss Hawks a lot more than it will please me."

"Oh, Aunt Myrtice!" He shrugged his shoulders impatiently Aunt Myrtice was all very well to write checks and make handsome presents, but she was not the companion he would choose for his idle moments.

Nancy remembered this conversation as she told the Duchess she would keep her promise. If she failed Bertram would refuse, and Nancy could not deprive the Duchess of what would give her so much pleasure. So she said yes, thank you, she would be very glad to come. It would have been funny, if she had not found it so pathetic, to see how eager the Duchess was to be friends with her now when there had been a time when the Duchess had quarreled with her so fiercely.

Nancy made a very careful toilet that evening, but when she was in her very best frock, she looked at the girl in the mirror and made a face at her.

"It is a sad fact, my dear," she told her frankly, "that you look a lot better in your uniform than you do in golden brown georgette. I am sadly afraid that Mr. Bertram Wadsley's architectural eye will be disappointed in you. It is very, very sad that you are not as beautiful as you are good. Perhaps I should have said 'deserving.' I suppose there are people who would question your goodness."

She tilted her nose at the girl in the mirror again and went downstairs, humming a little song. She met Miss Bidnell in the hall.

"You look like a party!" Miss Bidnell sounded almost envious, and no wonder. It must have been

a long time since Miss Bidnell had looked like a young and dimpled party.

"I fancy I feel more like a party than I look. I have just discovered that a uniform is the most becoming thing I wear. I shall have to climb so high in the world that I can make uniforms the fashion. Wouldn't that be a comfortable style to look forward to? I am on my way to dine with Miss Hawks and her nephew. Her nephew!" she repeated impressively.

"That will be very nice." Miss Bidnell never caught a glimmer of the meaning Nancy had put in her mention of Miss Hawks' nephew. "Have a good time and be in by ten."

"Poor old thing. She must be tired remembering rules," Nancy told Nancy Yates, as she went down the hall. "I should hate to be the superintendent of a lot of silly student nurses. But we have to have a superintendent. Oh, dear! I'm afraid that it is another case of Uncle Ben's pet word. That 'together' proposition stands like a stone wall in the way of a girl who wants to do things by herself and for herself."

As she closed the door behind her a liveried chauffeur jumped from his car and came toward her.

"Miss Yates?" he inquired, and when Nancy had admitted that she was Miss Yates, he opened the door of a big luxurious limousine.

Nancy nestled among the soft cushions with a sigh of pleasure. The limousine was so very big, so very

blue and shiny on the outside and so very soft and gray on the inside.

"Oh, Cinderella! Cinderella!" murmured Nancy, as she noted the beautiful appointments. "Your pumpkin coach must have been horribly ramshackle and slow. I've just got to have one of these gorgeous cars for myself! I couldn't live if I thought I would be poor all my days!"

It seemed no time at all before the car drew up under the *porte cochère* of a great pile of marble, and the chauffeur was opening the door. Nancy hated to leave that soft luxurious nest. It was so comfortable, and she might never occupy it again. And then she remembered what Miss Hawks had offered her and what old Andy Macnamara had offered her, and she chuckled. She wondered whether Bertram Wadsley or young Andy Macnamara would have the better taste in limousines. What fun it was to have the future before you instead of the past behind you! Nancy thought that her future looked like nothing in the world but a soft, rose-colored cushion as she stepped from the car.

The big front door opened magically, and she found herself in a hall which seemed a mile long and another mile wide and which appeared to be a museum of rare rugs, carved chairs and tables and old portraits. The fireplace was hooded, and the walls were paneled with wood so mellowed by time that it was like satin. Nancy was surprised. She never supposed that the Duchess was housed so—du-

cally. The Duchess had talked so much about being a plain business woman that four walls and a floor and a ceiling were about all that Nancy had imagined she would have for a home. But this was a treasure box. How wonderful it would be to live in it! Her face flushed as she thought of living in that treasure box. She swung around and saw coming toward her from the big drawing room not the Duchess but—the King.

"How jolly to see you again!" Nancy held out both slender hands. "I am glad that Miss Hawks invited you, too." But she was surprised. From the way Miss Hawks had talked of old Andy Macnamara she had never thought that she would ever invite him to break bread with her. "Isn't this the most gorgeous hall?" she whispered. "I didn't suppose that Miss Hawks lived in such a royal fashion!"

He laughed, but there was an uneasy note in his laugh and an uneasy expression in his eyes. "This hall doesn't belong to Miss Hawks," he said.

"It doesn't?" Nancy scarcely believed him. Surely Miss Hawks had not borrowed a hall for the evening.

"No, it doesn't? It's my hall. Yes, it is!" as Nancy stared at him, amazed that she should find herself in the King's hall when she had started for the Duchess' house. "You see I met Myrtice on my way to the station. The boy came home this noon. I told you he would be right along. And Myrtice told me she was going to send her car for you to-

night, that you were going to dine with her and Bert. I wanted you to see Andy before you saw any more of Myrt's pet, and so I kidnapped you."

"You did!" Nancy could not believe him even then. She did not know whether to be angry or amused, but she did know that it was very thrilling to be kidnapped by the King. She had made it very easy for him to kidnap her. Why she had never questioned the chauffeur! She had simply followed him to the car.

"Now, don't get angry," he said soothingly. "You'll have plenty of time to make your choice. But you've already met Bert, and it's only fair that you should meet my boy. Andy!" he shouted.

Andy came obediently. Much to Nancy's surprise he proved to be a tall angular young fellow with a round, good-natured, if rather sleepy, face which broke into a pleasant grin when he saw Nancy. His grandfather put one hand on his shoulder and took five of Nancy's ten fingers in his other hand.

"My boy," he said so solemnly that Nancy giggled, "if it hadn't been for this young lady you wouldn't have your grandfather with you to-night."

"Oh, not quite that!" Nancy was pink but more from suppressed amusement than from confusion.

"All of that!" insisted the King. "She saved my life twice," he told young Andy. "Once when I was scared to death and once when I was threatened with a bomb."

"Bomb!" At that young Andy did look awake.

"It was only a prairie chicken," corrected Nancy.

"Three of them. There wasn't the sign of a bomb anywhere."

"You didn't know that!" The King was determined to be grateful. "And you showed great courage and presence of mind. Miss Yates"—now that he had explained just what Nancy had shown he decided that it was time to be formal—"Miss Yates, I wish to present my grandson, Andrew Macnamara."

Nancy smiled and inclined her red brown head. Andy grinned.

"Miss Yates," he repeated formally, and then he added very informally; "I am very glad to meet the girl who saved my grandfather from dying of fear and from being blown up by three prairie chickens. I hope he gave you at least a drum stick?"

"He did more than that," dimpled Nancy, who decided that she liked the old King's grandson immensely. "He gave me a whole chicken. And that reminds me that now that I have met your grandson, Mr. Macnamara, I should like to go to Miss Hawks! I am to dine with her, you know," she reminded him.

"You are to dine here with me and Andy and Andy's sister, who hasn't come down yet,—a girl can prink everlastingly—and Doctor Jensen, if he gets here before we are through."

"Doctor Jensen!" Nancy was surprised again. The last time she had talked with Rolf Jensen he had not sounded as if he were going to dine anywhere unless it was at a cold storage plant on a menu of icicles and snow.

"Yes, Rolf Jensen. I want him to meet Corice. She's Andy's young sister and a silly irresponsible girl, just the sort of a girl who needs the kind of a balance wheel Rolf Jensen will make."

"My grandfather," young Andy told Nancy gently, as she stood and stared at the King, "believes in calling a spade a spade. He has no further use for romance. He has exchanged it for efficiency."

"Of course I have!" His grandfather seemed enormously proud of the trade he had made. "Now then, my dear, if you will go upstairs you will find a maid——"

"But I must go to Miss Hawks." Nancy felt that she would rather starve than eat guinea hen and mushrooms with Corice Macnamara and Rolf Jensen, who had been chosen by the old King as Corice's balance wheel. She would choke, she knew she should. "I simply can't stay."

"Stay? Of course you'll stay now you're here. You can telephone to Myrtice that you've changed your mind. You can tell her that you wanted to meet young Andy. You can tell her that I had you carried off. I don't mind letting Myrtice know that I got ahead of her for once!" And he chuckled happily and triumphantly.

But before Nancy could agree to telephone there was a loud ring at the door. Some one was outside with a finger on the bell for the whirring never ceased until the servant had dashed to open the door. Miss Hawks fairly burst into the hall.

"Andrew Macnamara!" she exclaimed furiously. "You have stolen my guest!"

Andrew Macnamara refused to be intimidated. "Myrtice Hawks," he looked straight into her red and agitated face, "what did you do with my memorandum on corn which you——" he hesitated and then added delicately—"borrowed?"

Miss Hawks gasped and gurgled, and she could not form into intelligible sentences the words which surged through her brain. The King spoke to her soothingly.

"Take your time, Myrtice. Take your time. How did you know I had stolen your guest?"

The guest was standing beside young Andy. Her eyes sparkled, her dimples flashed. Never would she have believed that she would be the bone over which two millionaires would squabble, but she found that it was mighty amusing to be a bone. Young Andy found the situation amusing, also. He laughed with her.

"I sent Harry after her with the car as I promised," gasped the Duchess. "And when he came back and said that she had gone I called up the hospital. Of course Miss Bidnell didn't know anything, and I asked for Doctor Jensen. Occasionally he displays an atom of brains. He said that he had seen you drive off in a big blue limousine," she told Nancy accusingly.

"He did?" Nancy had not seen Rolf Jensen watch her drive away in anything.

"Then I remembered that you had a blue limou-

sine," the Duchess turned to the King again, "and that I had been fool enough to crow a bit when I met you this morning. I can put two and two together as well as you can, and I put on my hat and called Bert and came right over!" And she nodded her head defiantly as if to ask the King what he was going to do about it now that she was there.

"You might as well take off your hat and stay for dinner," the King suggested with tardy hospitality. "Nobody but the family, Miss Yates and Andy and Doctor Jensen and Corice and——"

"Family!" The Duchess all but fainted, while Nancy had a queer sensation, like a stab, when she heard the Macnamara family named. "You haven't decided anything, have you?" she demanded of Nancy.

"Not a thing!" Nancy looked at the King, but there was more mirth than rebuke in her face, and he smiled and patted her hand.

"We mustn't hurry the child, Myrtice. It's a straight business proposition to her, and she has got to have a chance to study it. That was why I brought her here. You were going to try and railroad her into choosing Bert——"

"Of course you never thought of Andy!" interrupted the Duchess, in two minds whether to snatch Nancy and dash away or whether to stay and beard the King at his own board.

"Yes, I did. I admit it. Take off your hat, Myrtice, and smooth your hair. Too bad you

didn't bring Bert with you." He smiled pleasantly because she had not brought Bert.

"I have. He's in the car."

Nancy laughed. So did young Andy. They could not help it.

"Say," young Andy whispered to her, "are we in a movie film, or are we not?"

"I wonder," Nancy whispered back, and she really did wonder for it did not seem possible that in real life a King and a Duchess would wrangle about a poor little student nurse.

XXI

NANCY sat at the table between young Andy Macnamara and Bertram Wadsley. The Duchess saw that Bert was on one side of Nancy. And if Nancy had raised her eyes every time she spoke to young Andy she could have seen strong disapproval on the Duchess' hawklike features. Nancy was vividly reminded of the first time she had met the Duchess.

Rolf Jensen was across the table between the Duchess and Corice Macnamara. Corice was a very pretty and very smartly clothed young woman, and she seemed to be able to interest Rolf, for he talked to her in a very low voice and laughed heartily when she replied in a voice which was equally low. Nancy watched them curiously. Perhaps Corice, instead of Kitty Marrison, was to be Rolf's princess. It would not be hard for a man to marry Corice, she thought discontentedly, as she noted how black Corice's hair was and how white her skin was and how soft and well-shaped her great black eyes were. Corice wore a dinner gown of black lace in which many jet beads were entangled, and any artist would have promptly labeled her "A Study in Black and White." She made Nancy in her best brown georgette feel uncomfortably dowdyish, or would have made her feel dowdyish if young Andy had not been whispering

into her pink ear that he was not surprised a bit that his grandfather adored her and asking her if she knew that he was exactly like his grandfather. His whispers left her no time in which to remember that she had purchased her gown at a marked down sale at the Big Store while Corice must have had her black net direct from New York if not from Paris. Young Andy was a young man who hated to feel grass growing beneath his shoes, and so he moved rapidly. Nancy blushed adorably and dimpled and caught her breath at his haste and, to the satisfaction of the Duchess, turned to Bert to discover that he was looking at Corice with the eye of an architect.

"Do you think there is too much black and white?" he asked critically.

"I think she is stunning!" Nancy told him emphatically. "I wish I were black and white instead of red and yellow." Nancy did not appreciate the warm pallor of her creamy skin any more than she appreciated her red brown hair.

"Huh," snorted Bert. "Trust a girl to be dissatisfied. Don't you know that Helen of Troy and Cleopatra had red hair?"

"Poor things!" was all Miss Yates had to say to that.

The King pushed back his chair and rose. "I should like to speak to you a minute in the library, Jensen," he said.

Nancy looked up quickly. She supposed that the King was going to tell Rolf at once that he would

nake a splendid balance wheel for Corice. Didn't nen have the luck, she told Nancy Yates, but for ome reason she felt angry with Rolf. A man hould do his own wooing, even when he wooed princess.

"And, Andy, you take Miss Yates into the sun oom and show her the gold fish," went on the King, narshaling his forces. Like a good general he was going to leave nothing to chance. "There is one fish vith three tails and black stripes dotted with silver hat you won't find matched this side of Japan," he old Nancy as if to sharpen her appetite for gold ish. "And, Corice, you look after Bert and Myr-ice. You might show them that Inness I bought ast month."

"Bert would rather see the gold fish," the Duchess ld him sharply. "It will be quicker and cheaper r him to look at them in your sun room than to go Japan."

"And what will you look at?" he asked im-iently. He was royal enough to like his com-ıds obeyed.

The gold fish!" She tossed her head and looked im defiantly. If he thought that she was going t Nancy Yates saunter away with young Andy ok at three-tailed gold fish while Bert and e stared at a picture, even an Inness, he did not her. Corice was all right, she was an extreme-girl, and an Inness was always charming, but r the moment the Duchess was more interested ıcy Yates and Bert. She had never yet been

obliged to go to the hospital to plan for Bert's marriage, but she was afraid now that she might have to. Old Andy Macnamara threatened to make trouble.

Nancy laughed. It really was too amusing. She slipped her hand under the Duchess' arm.

"Yes," she said lightly, "we will all go to Japan."

An hour later when the King and Rolf joined them in the sun room Nancy could not fail to see that the former looked extremely satisfied, as if he had obtained what he wished, and the latter looked extremely bewildered, as if he had been given something which he had not expected. Nancy jumped to her feet.

"I must go home!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"Bert and I will take you," offered the Duchess in a flash.

"Andy will run her over. She is my guest," insisted the King.

"It is foolish to send for your car when mine is at the door," declared the Duchess.

"Miss Yates is going to walk with me," Rolf decided with a determination which made them all turn to him. "It's a wonderful night. You'd like to walk, wouldn't you?" He turned to Nancy and smiled.

"I should love to!" For Nancy was tired of being a bone for two dogs to squabble over. It had been amusing earlier in the evening, but now she found it tiresome, and she would be glad to walk away with Rolf. Perhaps he would tell her why he

had looked so bewildered and why the old King had looked so gratified.

The King approved of the walk. So did the Duchess. For if Nancy was walking with Rolf she was not driving with Bert nor with young Andy. Nancy knew what was in their minds; and she shrugged her slim shoulders as she went to put on her hat.

"This hasn't been the evening I planned." The Duchess was at her heels, and she spoke most discontentedly. "And you must come to me to-morrow. No matter what engagement Bert has made he can break it. He'll have to break it! No, I shall not take a refusal. I'll telephone to Miss Bidnell myself!" she said, when Nancy endeavored to explain that dining out was not the chief duty of a student nurse.

"Very well!" Nancy was not half as meek as she sounded, but she realized that it was useless to argue with the Duchess. "It has been great fun if it wasn't according to your plans," she added. "Isn't old Mr. Macnamara a perfect dear? I do like a man to be ruthless and confident." And while the poor Duchess wondered how she could make Bert ruthless and confident Nancy went downstairs and told the King to his face that he was a dear. "If your grandson were at all like you," she whispered, and he chuckled with pleasure. "I have had a very pleasant evening," she went on hurriedly, before he could tell her that he had been just like Andy when he was Andy's age. "Good-night, Miss Macnamara." She offered a hand to Corice, who

was exchanging last sentences with Rolf. Nancy distinctly heard something about a baby clinic at eleven. She supposed that they were making a date.

"I hope I shall see you soon again!" Corice exclaimed with pleasant cordiality. "Grandfather has told us how splendid you are, and it has been jolly for us to see for ourselves. If you only knew how I envy you! I should like to be of some use in the world, too, but grandfather——" She shrugged her shoulders and left grandfather to their imagination.

"Silly pose," Nancy whispered to Nancy Yates. "Catch her giving up her place and her limousines and her pearls for a cell in a nurses' home. Good-night, Mr. Macnamara," she said to young Andy with a smile, which made him stammer that he also hoped to see her soon.

"You shall, son," promised his helpful grandfather. "I'll see that she comes again very soon."

"Good-night, Mr. Wadsley." Nancy's cheeks were as red as the roses on the table at her elbow, as she turned to Bert. Otherwise you would have thought that she had not heard the royal promise.

"I say," stuttered Mr. Wadsley, under the influence of Nancy's rosy cheeks, and his aunt's compelling eye, "I'm sorry I'm not going to drive you home."

Neither Nancy nor Rolf seemed inclined for conversation as they swung into step and went down the avenue which was lighted by an enormous orange

moon hanging in the sky like a lantern. They walked several blocks before the silence was broken. It was Nancy who laughed suddenly.

"What a funny evening it has been! This was a great idea of yours—to walk home. It seemed stifling in that house, big as it is. And did you ever know any one as persistent as the Duchess? She invited me to dine to-morrow night with her—and Bert."

"She did?" Rolf frowned. He had been sauntering along beside Nancy with a most radiant expression on his face, but as she told him of the invitation she had received the radiant satisfaction was lost in an impatient frown.

"I am glad of it," Nancy went on gayly. "I shall have another good dinner and another chance to study the wonderful Bertram. Isn't young Andy fun? And old Mr. Macnamara? I thought he would bite the Duchess. Funny old dears with their nephew and their grandson. If they had their way I should be provided with a prince—with two princes!" she chuckled—"before you could say Jack Robinson."

With a quick, almost angry exclamation, Rolf stopped and stared at her.

"You have got to stop talking such silly rot!" he said roughly. "You are not going to marry any prince!"

"I'm not?" Nancy raised her eyebrows and meant to look at him coolly, but there was something behind the flash in his eyes which made her

heart double its beat and made her swallow quickly before she said with as much scorn as she could manage: "Perhaps you can tell me whom I am going to marry?"

He could and he did. "You are going to marry me!" The announcement astonished Rolf quite as much as it did Nancy, for until that minute he had not intended to ask Nancy to marry him, not for years and years, if ever. He certainly had never intended to ask her then. When they left the Macnamara's he had only meant to tell her what the King had told him in the library after dinner; he had wanted to tell her that and had waited a few moments because it amused him to think what a surprise he was going to give her.

"Yes, I am!" stammered Nancy, and there was quite a little indignation mixed with her scorn. It was all very well for her to joke about her marriage, but it was very far from well for Rolf Jensen, or any other man, to joke about it. That was her special prerogative, to laugh at Nancy Yates. But it was very hard to speak as scornfully and indignantly as she wished to speak when her heart was beating so fast that she was afraid that it would choke her.

"Yes, you are!" insisted Rolf with sharp determination. "And you are going to stop talking and thinking about princes and palaces!"

"Why—why——" gasped Nancy, for Rolf was not joking. He could not have been more serious if he had been a gray-haired judge, and her heart

gave a bigger jump. She thought it was going to jump right away from her, and she put her hand to her throat as if to hold it in.

His hand touched her arm, but she stepped away from him quickly as if she felt that it would be far safer to have a few feet between them. The touch of his hand made her quiver to her heels, but, thank goodness! it untied her tongue and stiffened her backbone.

"Moon madness," she said, and by a herculean effort she managed a soft laugh. She would not take him seriously, she thought swiftly, not for a minute. It would not be fair to her—nor to him. "What would 'Uncle Alec' Minor say if he knew that his clever young disciple was proposing to commit professional suicide by marrying a penniless nurse?" She went on more unsteadily than lightly, for it was very hard to be fair when he was looking at her as she had never seen him look at a girl. Even in the moonlight she could see the eager light in his eyes. "Don't let us be silly," she begged.

"Silly!" he gasped. "Silly!"

She nodded her head. "It would be absolutely foolish to spoil our splendid friendship with such nonsense. I like you a lot," she went on frankly, "and I am glad and proud to know that you like me, but we will stop there. Yes, we will!" as he would have told her what he thought of the stop she proposed. "You can't afford to marry a poor girl, and I don't want to marry a poor man. Some day you will have a big reputation and patients will come

flocking to you from all parts of the world, but now —Why, you haven't any patients! You couldn't afford to marry any one but a Corice Macnamara!" She caught her lip between her teeth as she spoke of Corice, and suddenly her pulses throbbed, for if Rolf said that Nancy Yates was going to marry him he could not have accepted any proposition that ridiculous old Andy Macnamara might have made to him in regard to Corice. It was rather dog in the mangerish for Nancy to let her pulse throb at that thought, and she said quickly, "Or a Kitty Marrison, for years and years! I can't wait for a man to make a fortune. I should just be getting older all the time. I can't waste my youth and beauty," her laugh at the old joke was not very merry, "waiting for any man. They are all the fortune I have, and if I don't invest them wisely I shall lose them!" She turned away so that she should not see the disgust which he must feel at her words.

"You don't mean that, Nancy?" He could not believe that any girl could be as calculating as Nancy said she was. "Why, I've been crazy about you ever since that afternoon you had the outburst in Miss Hawks' room! You were so brave and wonderful! And we've had such good times together!" His voice sank to a wooing whisper. "Skating last winter and this summer—I didn't want to care for you!" he exclaimed almost angrily as she refused to look at him. "I know as well as you do that I haven't anything to offer a girl—didn't have," he corrected himself quickly. "But to-night——"

She would not listen to anything about to-night. "I have told you any number of times that I am not going to marry a poor man. I have made no secret of it. You can't say I have!" she insisted hotly.

"No, I can't say that!" He was honest. "I suppose if my father had hung on to that ore land and I was getting the royalties from it you would have a different answer," he said bitterly.

"Perhaps." She would be honest, too. "You wouldn't ruin your future then if you married me. You wouldn't be poor and unknown."

He put his hands on her shoulders and swung her into the light which shone through the open door so that he could look into her face. "I never saw a girl like you!" he exclaimed unsteadily. "I've heard that girls were mercenary, but——No, you needn't be afraid! I'm not going to kiss you!" He spoke with hot scorn, for she had turned her head and shrunk away from him. "Your kisses are for sale, and I haven't money to buy them if I wanted kisses which could be bought. I've made a mistake. I thought that at heart you were sweet and brave and kind, but you're not. You're not! You are only greedy! I'm glad I'm going away. And I hope to God I'll never see you again!" He pushed her from him as his hands dropped from her shoulders and hurried down the steps.

Nancy caught her breath and hesitated. She felt a strong impulse to call him back and explain. Her face was as white as snow, and she shivered. Going away! What did he mean? He had never said

anything about going away. Of course she knew that his time of service at the hospital was over, and they had talked of what he would do when he left. There had been several openings, but Rolf had chosen none of them. He spoke now as if he had made his decision. She stared after him and decided that she would not call him back. He should have told her.

"Well, that's over," she said to Nancy Yates, and she put her hand to her forehead and pushed back her hat as if it felt heavy and binding. "He'll never forgive me, but I don't care!" She threw back her head as she went in and up the stairs to her little white cell. "You'll thank me for this some day, Rolf Jensen!" she prophesied drearily. "It would never do for you to marry any one now. Why, you haven't anything! And 'Uncle Alec' Minor did say that it killed a young doctor to marry a nobody before he had a practice. Look at my own father! I am not going to stand in your way!" she insisted with quivering lips. "A girl who would do that would be more selfish than I am. Remember that, Nancy Mary Yates, and mind your head!"

XXII

AFTER staring at the white-faced, defiant-eyed girl in her mirror for several minutes Nancy pulled open a drawer and took out her father's journal. She wrapped it up and addressed it in a firm hand to Doctor Rolf Jensen. Then she wrote a little note. Her hand tore across the paper, and the ink spattered because she was in such haste to write something which would explain Nancy Mary Yates to Rolf Jensen.

"I want you to read my father's journal and see how his life was ruined because he married before he had built up a practice. Then perhaps you will understand why I am so selfish and mercenary. Doctor Minor told me that you have it in you to be one of the big men of the world and you must not spoil your chance for any girl. I hope we shall always be friends. You have been wonderful to me and helped me a lot. What fun we shall have talking over our life at the Hawks when you are a world famous doctor,—for you are going to be world famous, I know. The best of luck to you always." Her pen halted, and she took three nibbles at the end of it before she slowly signed herself "Always your friend, Nancy Mary Yates."

She was not altogether pleased with the note when she read it over, but it would have to do, and she tucked the envelop under the string of the little package and slipped down to the office to leave them to be given to Rolf the first thing in the morning. It was after midnight and the night nurses were coming up from their supper. They looked after Nancy and called to her:

"Want to trade places?"

And Nancy called back that she would be glad to trade places only "Biddy's" sharp eyes would be sure to distinguish between Lydia Peterson's yellow hair and Nancy's red head. Nancy meant what she said. She knew she would not sleep a wink, and if she were awake she might better be working than tossing about on her narrow white bed. She had such a lot to think about that she could not go to sleep. There was Rolf Jensen, who said he loved her and who had gone away, she did not know where. She did not suppose he wanted her to know where he had gone! And there were the old King and his jolly grandson for new friends. Where could Rolf be going? And there were the Duchess and her wonderful nephew. With two such friends as young Andy Macnamara and Bertram Wadsley a girl should never miss a poor young doctor. Nancy vowed that she would not miss him, but it did make her furious to think that, so long as they had been such friends, he had not told her where he was going. Why she had told him everything, always. It had been the easiest thing in the world to tell him

things. Oh, well, she supposed it was all in the day's work. One made friends, and one lost them. Nothing stayed by one but—money. That was the really important thing in this selfish old world. And she could have it, yes, she could! great big piles of it. She had only to choose between young Andy and Bert, and she could buy everything she pleased. The King or the Duchess would see to that.

She looked at the moonlight which streamed in at her window and made the little room as light as day and wondered which she could like the best, young Andy or Bert, or which would annoy her the least. And where on earth was Rolf Jensen going? To think that he had asked her, instead of Corice or Kitty, to help him make a home! How she did hate that "together" word of Uncle Ben's! She wanted to have things done for her. She was tired helping to do them for other people. Oh, wouldn't she ever go to sleep!

At lunch the girls were all talking about Rolf and the big opportunity which had come to him. Nancy was all big ears, and outwardly her indifference gave the impression that the big opportunity was an old story to her. She was not going to let Lydia or Gladys or Mary Farley think that she was the last person in the hospital to learn what Rolf Jensen was going to do, not when every one knew that she and Rolf had been such friends. She would die ignorant first.

But her big ears told her that she would not have

to die ignorant, and that Rolf was going to Marathon to accept a position as physician and surgeon on the staff of one of the largest ore mines in the northern part of the state. He would have charge of the health and well-being of twenty-five hundred people. The girls thought it was a wonderful opportunity, but Nancy was furious.

"It's just a pocket," she told Nancy Yates. "He'll never get out of it. He'll stay there and get old and gray and be forgotten. Thank goodness, I didn't let you fall in love with him!" For she remembered how her heart had thumped when Rolf had told her whom she was going to marry, and the thump had made her afraid that possibly she might care for him, but she knew now that she did not, that she never had. She told Nancy Yates that she never had. "I hope he goes to Marathon at once," she added. "I've been getting soft and silly, but if he goes at once, and we don't have a lot of arguments, I'll be all right." And she tossed her head so that every one could see how all right she would be.

It was not until the next day that she saw Rolf again, and then it was just by chance in the corridor. There had been so many of these little meetings, a few words and a laugh, in the months Nancy had been in the hospital, and she felt a twinge of pain as she realized that this was the last.

"I am glad I met you," Rolf said quickly, but he did not look at her, and his voice was as coldly impersonal as a young man can keep his voice when he

is talking to a girl who has crept into the very deepest corner of his heart. "I can give this into your own hands." He offered her the journal which she had sent him. "That may offer an explanation," he said suddenly, "but it isn't a reason. Every page in that book tells how much your father got out of his life. It wasn't wasted——"

"It was!" Nancy interrupted fiercely. "'Uncle Alec' Minor said it was! And he knew father. Father was the cleverest man in his class and see what he had, the hardest kind of drudgery. And Doctor Minor——"

"I am not going to argue with you," Rolf told her coldly. "We have done enough of that. I'll just say good-by." And he held out his hand.

"You aren't going now?" faltered Nancy, looking at the long, slender, sensitive fingers before she gave him her hand.

"To-night. I've been packing. Mr. Macnamara doesn't give me——"

"Mr. Macnamara!" Nancy was surprised, although she should not have been if she would but remember the many talks which she and Rolf and Mr. Macnamara had had when Mr. Macnamara was a hospital patient. "That was what he was talking about to you last night? He is sending you away!" The words slipped over her lips before she realized how they would sound.

"He is giving me a big opportunity!" Rolf stood before her like a long, yellow-headed ramrod.

"An opportunity to go to seed!" she choked.

"A man can't go to seed when he is taking care of twenty-five hundred people. It isn't every young doctor who can start out with that many patients!" proudly. "I've known all along, I've told you, too, that I'd never fit into a city practice. I'd swear at women who had nothing the matter with them but a desire to go to Palm Beach. And I shouldn't have any patience with men who ate too much and exercised too little. I want to work with real people! Perhaps Mr. Macnamara is sending me out of the way, but he is sending me where I am glad to go, and where I'll have a chance to prove what I have told you, that a man has to fight for his country even in peace times. I would rather help make good Americans out of the Poles and Lithuanians in Marathon than be the personal physician to a dozen millionaires. That is the work I am fitted for!" He squared his shoulders. "And it is the work I am going to do! I hope you will be as lucky and get your chance. Good-by."

He pressed her fingers lightly and gave them back to her and went away with his head in the air. He never once glanced over his shoulder. If he had he would have seen a nurse with a puzzled face, a nurse who seemed rooted to the corridor as she stared at her fingers and wondered if Rolf really believed half even of what he had said. The nurse might be there yet, she was so very puzzled, if Miss Bidnell had not seen her and reminded her that her place was in the operating room at that hour, it was not mooning in the corridor. Nancy sniffed as she went up to the

operating room, and she held her head very high.

"Aren't you glad that you didn't make a silly of yourself over any altruistic socialist?" she asked Nancy Yates. "You must never forget that it is the welfare of Nancy Mary Yates that is the most important thing in the world to you."

She rather gloried in her selfishness and flaunted it brazenly. And she actually was just as selfish as a girl could be when that girl was doing a hundred and one more things for her patients than were on the schedule of any student nurse. "But, bless my soul," she would exclaim with a fine show of irritation, "anything that makes my patients more comfortable makes my work easier, doesn't it? I shouldn't take half the pains I do with them if I weren't so selfish." Nancy could always explain her motives even when her actions did not match them.

She was so very busy that she had no time in which to send many thoughts to Marathon and wonder what Rolf Jensen was doing with twenty-five hundred brand new patients. It seemed as if all Waloo decided to be ill at the same time, and there was a constant procession of strained and frightened faces into the operating room and of white cocoons out of the operating room. Nancy was caught so deep in this sea of pain and suffering that she often felt like a fish which could only come up for an occasional breath of air.

"To-day," she counted on her fingers for the edification of Miss Myers, "we had a chorus man from

"Oh, My Louisa!", the president of the Woman's Club, a poor old washwoman, the head of the gimlet factory and a street sweeper. An operating room is the real seat of democracy, isn't it? And in fifteen minutes we are going back for an emergency case. This is a great life, Miss Myers, and if I don't lose all of my youth and beauty before I find that tardy old prince I'll be lucky!" She laughed, but there was not as much merriment in her laugh as there had been. It was not so easy to laugh and joke about her prince as it had been when she started in search of him.

When she had time for an unprofessional thought, which was not often, for she was so tired at night that she fell asleep even before her head touched her pillow, she remembered young Andy Macnamara and Bertram Wadsley.

"But neither of them will do," she told Nancy Yates fretfully. "They don't fill my specifications at all. I came here to find an incurable millionaire, and Andy and Bert are as sound as nuts. And neither of them has anything but expectations. I can't waste my time on them."

The old King and the Duchess had something to say to that. It was not possible to refuse all of the invitations which they extended, for the colder Nancy grew the warmer the King and the Duchess became. Any thermometer would have registered them as at boiling point. Nancy would have laughed at them, if she had not been so tired that she could only be impatient.

"Look here!" Young Andy hunted her out of a corner of his grandfather's library and dropped into a chair which faced her. "Why are you always running away from me?"

"Running away from——" Her cheeks turned crimson, and she looked at him indignantly to hide the guilty feeling which was inside of her.

"Me." Andy neatly finished the sentence for her. "Don't fib. You know I am the fellow here who scares you to death. It isn't old granddad, and it isn't Corice. And you are scared because you know, and you know that I know that granddad wants you to marry me. I'm not sure that it is such a bad scheme," he went on with a frankness which made even frank Nancy catch her breath. "That night I met you I was afraid that you thought you were in love with Jensen. Yes," as Nancy gave a little exclamation and shrank back in her big chair. "But you shouldn't marry a doctor, you know. That's all right for Corice——"

"Corice!" she interrupted feebly, finding it difficult just at that moment to breathe as deeply as she had been taught to breathe.

"Corice can afford to marry a young doctor if she wants to. She has money. But you—you shouldn't waste your life in an office waiting for patients. You should be enjoying the good things of this world. Maybe I am the man to give them to you. Grandfather thinks I am, and I have a lot of confidence in his judgment, and maybe I'm not. I don't know yet whether I want to marry you." His candor was

almost embarrassing. "And I take it you don't know yet whether you want to marry me. But while we are in this uncertain state of mind, heart, rather, why can't we be friends? I'm willing to fall in love with you. I'll go farther and say I should like to fall in love with you, so I am going to see just as much of you as I can. You might take the same chance. It won't commit you to anything. And if we do fall in love with each other, why we'll make granddad radiantly happy. And if we don't, we can still be good friends, can't we?"

Nancy heard him with frowns and laughter, but when he finished she was laughing, and she held out the slim hands which the rubber gloves had kept soft and white. "All right," she agreed. "It's a risk, but I never yet refused to take a dare. You know," her face sobered, "I don't want to fall in love with you, for I can't marry you. You are far too well and strong, and you haven't a penny to your name. You only have what your grandfather gives you. And your grandfather could leave everything he has to your sister or your second cousin. He could even give it all to a hospital if he wished to."

"He won't." Andy was not at all ruffled at what his grandfather might do. "Grandfather thinks too much of the name. I am Andrew Macnamara, too, you know. He will leave everything to me. You don't need to worry your red head about that for a minute."

"Well, I do." And indeed she looked worried. "I can't help it. You know I hate and despise a

loafer. I think every one, man, woman and child, should do some work to help the world roll along more smoothly. I should think you could lend a hand. I should think you would want to work. You might start a fortune of your own, and then if that rainy day we hear so much about ever comes, you would have your own umbrella."

"Would you like me any better if I did?" he asked, and tangled up with the laughing words was a real seriousness which made her answer him seriously.

"I don't know whether I should like you any better, but I should respect you more."

"I must get an alarm clock, granddad," Andy said to the King when he came in a few moments later. "I am a laboring man from this day forth, and an alarm clock is the first tool I shall buy."

"What are you going to labor at?" The King looked keenly from the young man to the young woman. Was Nancy responsible for this first symptom of a desire to work which young Andy had ever shown? If Nancy was, well, old Andy Macnamara would be glad to hang her with diamonds. Old Andy hated and despised loafers as much as Nancy Yates did.

"I'll have to look over the want 'ads' in the *Gazette* and see who needs a handy man," grinned Andy.

"Humph," grunted the old King. "It would be more to the point if you would look up the market conditions in regard to corn!"

XXIII

THE DUCHESS, was not at all pleased at what the days produced, and she did not hesitate to say so.

"Old Andy Macnamara is just gobbling Nancy Yates!" she told Bert indignantly. "It's a shame! I think I'll ask her to spend her vacation with us at the farm so she may have a chance to see some one besides young Andy Macnamara. I'll invite her, and you can make your plans to go with us," she told him sharply.

"Yes, Aunt Myrt," he said dutifully. "I'll make my plans fit yours." It really would not be so difficult to cut his plans to fit those of his aunt for it was a dull season in architecture, and he rather liked Nancy Yates. She waked him up. She made him feel as if he were at one end of an electric wire and she held the other for little sparks danced hither and yon through him, but it might be just as well to let Aunt Myrt think he was going to the farm as a favor to her and not because he liked to be with Nancy.

Nancy's eyes sparkled when the Duchess asked her how she would like to spend her vacation at the Duchess' farm on Swallow Lake.

"I'd love it!" She never hesitated the fraction of a second. "It is mighty good of you to ask me."

More than one reason made Nancy glad to go to Swallow Lake. She was tired. The summer had

been unusually long and hard, and she could get the rest she needed at Swallow Lake. She had looked forward to going to Mifflin. Her face had glowed at the thought of the warm welcome which Uncle Ben and Aunt Alice would give her. She was homesick for them and for Mifflin. When she had left Mifflin she had not cared if she never saw the little town again, but now, as she thought of it in it's gay autumn dress, the tears slipped into her eyes, and she knew that she cared a lot about Mifflin. And then she had received a letter from Doris, rather a peremptory letter in which Doris wanted to know what Nancy had done to George Yardley the last time he was in Waloo. He had had the most awful grouch ever since he came home, and he wouldn't say anything but that he guessed Nancy had found her Prince Moneybags all right. And if Nancy had, Doris would not presume to criticize Nancy, but she never could be so mercenary and selfish, nor so heartless. When she married, if she ever did marry, it would be for love and nothing else. If it was true that Nancy was going to marry for money then Doris thought that she might leave George alone. In her opinion George was worth a dozen empty-headed rich men. Every one in Mifflin thought that George was perfectly wonderful, and he was, too. Even Nancy Yates would have to admit that if she told the truth. And if Nancy wouldn't marry George she hadn't any right to encourage him. She should leave him alone and let him forget her. George was too fine to be kept

dangling on tenterhooks, whatever tenterhooks might be. Doris thought that Nancy should be ashamed of herself. George had been up the evening he had come back from Waloo. He hadn't said much, but he had been so sad and brave that she wanted to do something for him. She had made him fruit cup after a new recipe. George had thought it was awfully good. Doris had worn her new organdie, and George had thought it was awfully becoming. She hoped Nancy wouldn't be hurt because she had written exactly what she thought, but she had to tell the truth, and she did believe that it was horrid for any girl to keep a man like George Yardley on tenterhooks, whatever tenterhooks were. And so on for several pages more of Doris' fine pretty hand which was like Doris' fine pretty self.

Nancy had smiled a crooked little smile as she read the letter, and her fingers had slipped to the left of her chest as if to make sure that she was not heartless. Doris need not worry. It was perfectly plain that George would turn to her with her fruit cup and her new organdie. George would forget that he had ever thought he cared for Nancy Mary Yates. George was fine, big and strong and honest and true, but he could not give Nancy a garage full of limousines, nor a closet full of imported frocks, nor a pantry full of expensive eats.

"I never in the world could marry him," Nancy told Nancy Yates with emphasis. "And so I hadn't better go to Mifflin. I'll leave him alone with Doris and then in the spring perhaps I can get a few days

off to go to their wedding. Doris is exactly the girl George should marry. I've always said so. He is a small-town man, and Doris is a small-town girl. They are fine, both of them, but they are satisfied with small-town things. It's lucky they are, for every one can't live in cities. My word, I'd die if I had to spend my three score years and ten in Mifflin! Everybody in Mifflin is so comfortable that there isn't any one to do things for, and it wouldn't be much fun to be rich if you couldn't do things for people. I've always liked those old English prints —Lady Bountiful with her cape and hood and her big baskets full of goodies and her big chariot and her footman and her coachman and the poor mother and her children bobbing their thanks with their mouths watering. It must give you such a comfortable feeling in your inside really to help people. I'd like it. That's one reason, a little teeny one, why I should like to find that old millionaire. Doris needn't worry. I shan't see George this fall if I can help it."

So she wrote a little note to Doris and told her that she was going to the northern part of the state with Miss Myrtice Hawks.

"Of course you have heard of Miss Myrtice Hawks? She is rich as the richest cream, and queer, too, but that doesn't matter as long as she is rich. The only relative she has in the world is a nephew. I suppose he will have all of her money some day. He is an architect and has been so busy studying in

New York that he has never 'architected' much yet, but he is working now on a civic theater. I am awfully interested in it. If he were old and at the point of death I should marry him before he could say 'I shan't.' George can tell you about him. George met him one afternoon at the Waloo. I am glad you appreciate George. He is fine, if he isn't a millionaire. Dear me, since I came here millions mean nothing to me. I guess I shall have to look for a billionaire. If you come up to town to shop be sure to telephone me. I am crazy to see you. I can tell you things that will make your hair curl."

Doris read part of that letter to George and shook her pretty head and murmured that she didn't understand how Nancy could be so shamelessly mercenary. A girl should think of something besides money. She thought it was awful to talk even of marrying an old man for what he had. It was nauseating! And George agreed with her and thought how pretty she was in her new taffeta and how good the chocolate cake and gingerade she had made for him were. Doris would never be Nancy, but she was pretty and sweet and good. She would never stir a fellow as Nancy did. George sighed, too. It had been fine to be stirred. Yes, he would take another piece of cake. It was awfully good. And what had she put in the drink? It wasn't like any ginger ale he had ever had.

XXIV

THE Duchess stopped at the hospital to see Nancy. She met her at the door, coming in from the garden where she had been for her "lungful of fresh air." The wind had kissed more color into her cheeks and blown her soft hair about her face. There were times when Nancy made the Duchess feel very, very old, and if it had not been for the many more times when Nancy made her feel absurdly young, the Duchess would not have cared if she never saw Nancy Yates again. When she met her at the door that day she wished that Bert could see her with her wind-kissed cheeks and her wind-tossed hair. Bert would have to admire her if he saw her with the Duchess' covetous old eyes.

"I just stopped to ask you to be ready by nine o'clock to-morrow," she told Nancy in her quick sharp way. "I want to start early enough to make the trip in a day."

"I'll be ready at seven!" exclaimed Nancy hungrily. "I'm ready now. It doesn't take long to pack when you haven't anything to pack. I do hope that it will be a fine day. I've been presenting a petition to the weather man. The country should still be dressed in some of its best red and yellow and brown clothes. Don't you love September, Duchess? I always feel that I have slipped into fairyland in

September. I wish October was farther away!" She frowned because September could not linger longer. "What a good time we are going to have." And she squeezed the Duchess' fingers.

"H—m," mumbled the Duchess. "That depends on what you call a good time. We shall go to bed at nine and get up at nine and in between we'll eat a little and motor a little and read a little. That might not sound like a good time to some girls."

"It sounds like heaven to me!" exclaimed extravagant Nancy. "Imagine sleeping until nine! I had forgotten what beds are for. It is really awfully good of you, Duchess dear, to take me with you!"

The Duchess did not want gratitude, and she grunted impatiently. "I shall feel safer up there with a nurse," she told Nancy. "I don't suppose you realize how unsettled that country is. The nearest neighbor is fifteen miles away."

"How inconvenient when you are out of gasoline and want to borrow an egg or a cup of molasses. We shall have a chance to get really acquainted, shan't we, just the two of us?"

"And Bert." The Duchess spoke carelessly, as if they had discussed Bert's company a dozen times, when as a matter of fact the Duchess had never told Nancy that Bert was to go to the farm with them. She had thought it wiser not to tell her. "He is going to drive us up." She hastened to give a reason for Bert to go with them.

"Oh, is he?" Nancy looked thoughtful. She knew that the Duchess had a perfectly competent

chauffeur, and she could see how little rest she would get at the farm if Bert were there. No wonder she frowned.

"He doesn't think it is safe for two women to make the trip alone. I don't know what he thinks will happen," grumbled the Duchess, who was inwardly in the seventh heaven because Bert was going with them.

"What a devoted nephew! But what could happen?" Nancy thought she had a right to know the perils of the road before she ventured on it.

"You haven't said anything to old Andy Macnamara, have you?" The Duchess spoke as if suddenly she had thought of something which might happen if Nancy had made a confidant of old Andy Macnamara for a man who would kidnap a girl in Waloo might do anything on a country road.

"Not a word." Nancy knew that the old King would throw cold water on this visit to the Duchess, and so she had not mentioned it to him. The easiest way to avoid an argument is to keep silent on subjects which are arguable.

"H—m. I wish you would bring your father's journal with you. There is one part I should like to read again."

"Is there?" Nancy was pleased to hear that the Duchess had been so impressed with her father's journal that she wanted a second reading. "It's wonderful that a man could be as brave and as unselfish as my father, isn't it? If it weren't for that journal I think I should despise all men."

"It's an amazing record of lost opportunities," was the surprising answer. "It's a lucky thing—I mean it will be a lucky thing for you—that I read it." But the Duchess went away without telling Nancy any more than that, and Nancy did not wonder what she meant for she had too many other things to do.

Her petition to the weather man must have been received and given favorable action, for the next day was as beautiful as a late September day can be in Minnesota and that means a very beautiful day, indeed. Nancy had to make a number of farewell visits to special patients and to assure little Miss Ethelwynne Myers that she would not forget her while she was away.

"I'll think of you every time I eat a new-laid egg," she promised. "I'll do better than that. I'll send you a dozen right from the nest."

"If you see Doctor Jensen anywhere up north," began Miss Myers.

"Doctor Jensen!" It sounded as if Nancy had quite forgotten that she had ever known a man named Rolf Jensen.

"Isn't Marathon in the northern part of the state?" Miss Myers' confidence in her geography was shaken by the chill interrogation in Nancy's voice. "I thought it was, and you said you were going north, and so I thought if you met him you could tell him that I'm just about the same. He'll like to know." She was sure he would, but because

Nancy would not look sure, too, the tears came into her faded eyes.

"Of course he will, and I shall." Nancy was ashamed of herself. "The farm isn't anywhere near Marathon, Miss Myers, but if I see Doctor Jensen I'll tell him."

She would not see him if she could help it, she told Nancy Yates, as she went away, stopping at the door to wave her hand to the envious faces looking at her from the beds. "He has gone out of your life and you have forgotten all about him. You have your work cut out for you, and all there is for you to do is to do it."

The ducal touring car came snorting to the curb and heads were thrust out of windows and hands were waved as Nancy drove away.

"Some people have all the luck," sniffed Edith Needstrom, deep green with envy. "But I wouldn't bow down to rich old women even to go on a motor trip."

"Nancy Yates doesn't bow down to any one!" Lydia Peterson was furious at the implication. "You know she doesn't! She talks a lot about herself but if you aren't as blind as a bat you've seen that she's always the first one to do for the other fellow. Didn't she help you out last week when you wanted to be with your sister? And look what she did for Gladys! I hope Miss Hawks will be decent to her!"

"I hope Nancy will be decent to Miss Hawks," giggled Dollie Maybie. "Do you remember the

day Miss Hawks called Nancy a thief, and Nancy called Miss Hawks a stingy old thing? They've been thick as can be ever since. But it wouldn't be a safe example to follow," she prophesied ruefully. "I'd never dare call one of my patients a stingy old thing."

"I should hope not!" The green Miss Needstrom was horrified and discouraged. If that was the way to obtain favors from rich patients Miss Needstrom knew that she would never have any.

Nancy was remembering that same day as she settled herself in the big touring car between the Duchess and Bertram, who evidently was going to drive from the tonneau if he kept his promise to his aunt.

"To see us now no one would believe that you ever called me a thief, and that I had called you a miser," she chuckled.

"You never!" There had been any number of times when Bert had thought that his aunt was a miser, but he never had dared to tell her to her face that she was one. He regarded Nancy with awed admiration as if she had climbed into a lion's den and placed her head in a lion's mouth. What a girl she was!

"Indeed, I did! Didn't I, Duchess? I was an undisciplined impulsive child then, but I've learned a lot since. Gracious! I should think I had! But I'm not sorry I called you names, Duchess. You never would have thought of me as anything but a nurse if I hadn't, would you? I had to impress my

individuality upon you!" And she peeped around to see if the Duchess agreed with her. "What a heavenly day! Not so many gay clothes on the trees as I should like to see, but they are still pretty. I do love to go into the country in a big touring car with a duchess." She sighed happily and squeezed the Duchess' hand.

"And a handsome young architect," suggested Bertram, eager to be one of the party, and if he had had any encouragement at all he would have given her his hand to squeeze. "I hope you don't find me in the way."

"Not at all in the way," politely. She sniffed September's fragrant breath with appreciative nostrils. "It seems so good to smell something besides carbolic and lysol. Who wouldn't be here instead of in an old operating room counting surgical sponges! Don't you love autumn? I do wish I could be sure of growing old as beautifully as that maple tree. But I'll lose my teeth and my hair and grow fat and shapeless. It almost makes me wish to be a maple tree!"

The country was beautiful as they ran through it, for enough of the gorgeous fall fashions was left to make drifts of gay color. And even if the drifts were a bit faded they showed charming combinations of softened reds and yellows and browns. In the bronze carpet which ran away from the road to lose itself in the newly plowed fields were patches of dried purple asters and yellow daisies, while above

was a sky so clear and blue that it made Nancy's eyes ache just to look at it.

"Is it really as beautiful as I think, or is it so wonderful to me because I haven't seen anything but doctors and nurses and patients for so long that I've forgotten what the country looks like?" she asked wistfully.

One o'clock found them skirting the shore of a small lake, a very jewel of a lake, a sapphire set in rubies and emeralds and topazes, and they stopped under a group of friendly willow trees. The chauffeur unstrapped a hamper and by magic produced a table and three folding chairs. Nancy watched him with laughing eyes. She thought he was the best prestidigitator she had ever seen.

"What a grand thing it is to be rich," she remarked idly. "Money gives you a chair at a picnic so that you don't have to put your knees in your mouth."

She insisted on helping to unpack the hamper and exclaimed again when she found the hot food containers with soup and potatoes *au gratin* and French peas and fried chicken and coffee, and the cold containers with ice cream and lemonade. There were rolls and sandwiches and delicious little frosted cakes. The table fairly groaned when the hamper was unpacked. Nancy heard it.

"Listen!" She held up a quieting finger so that the Duchess and Bert could hear it, too, and feel sorry for it. "My, but I am glad that I am not on a buttermilk diet!" she exclaimed hungrily. "Did

you ever know soup could taste so good?" She appealed to the Duchess, who was playing with her spoon instead of eating with it. "You certainly know how to travel comfortably. The magic carpet was nothing to you. I never heard that it had a dining rug."

Bert put down his spoon and looked at her. "I never knew a girl could be as crazy over things as you are!" he said in surprise.

Nancy helped herself to potatoes. "I expect you never knew a girl who has had as little as I have. Of course you couldn't understand me. You have always had things."

"I haven't always had things." The Duchess looked at Nancy and nodded as if she could understand her if Bert never could. "I can remember when we lived on the farm and we didn't have much of anything."

"You can!" Nancy's surprise was flattering. "How did you get things? It might help me if you would tell me."

"My father got enough ahead to buy land that was sold for taxes, and the land proved to be ore land." The Duchess' mouth was full of peas so that Nancy was not sure she had the rule right, and she asked to have it repeated.

Back in the closet of Nancy's mind was a vague memory which stirred at the mention of ore land, but Nancy never took the memory out to shake it and see if the moths had nibbled it, she was too occupied at that moment with the frosted cakes.

"That doesn't interest me as much perhaps as it should," she said. "I shouldn't know what to do with land even if I had the money to buy some, but if I were the fellow who had to sell good land for taxes I'd be a socialist if not an I. W. W."

"You can't stop to think too much of the other fellow," the Duchess told her sharply. "Not if you want to be rich."

"I know." Nancy spoke humbly, as if she were aware of an obstacle which was going to stand in her way. "And that's exactly where I'm going to have trouble. I do think of the other fellow. My father taught me to think of him, and it's a lot harder to break a habit than it is to form one."

XXV

THE farmhouse had changed since the days when the Hawks had nothing, and as Nancy saw it with its sprawling yellow wings, its sunroom and sleeping porch, it looked as if it were trying to grow into a pretentious country place. A landscape architect, a friend of Bert's, had tried to do something with the grounds, but he had received so much advice from his client that he had become discouraged and now the shrubbery grew as it pleased. The house stood on a little knoll and at its feet was one of Minnesota's ten thousand lakes. Nancy drew a deep breath of pleasure as she gazed from the sprawling house to the sleepy lake which told her that the sky was powdering its face with flecks of white cloud.

"I should think you would come here when you want rest and quiet instead of to the hospital!" she exclaimed, for there was a wonderful feeling of peace oozing from land and water. "It's like being in a feather bed on a twenty below zero night," she decided. "I had forgotten that there was so much peace and quiet anywhere."

"That's exactly why I go to the hospital," the Duchess told her. "A restless person can have too much peace and quiet."

"I wonder?" questioned Nancy, the student nurse,

and she eyed her hostess with scientific speculation.

"I know," insisted the Duchess.

There was no doubt that there was plenty of peace and quiet. For the first few days Nancy did nothing but sleep. She took to the rôle of a hibernating bear with ease and success. She had not realized how tired she was.

"Nancy Yates," she said sadly to the reflection in the mirror, "you certainly look like an old rag. I am going to have some job to transform you into a piece of fresh, crisp organdie again."

So she went to bed early and rose late. So did Bert. It was the Duchess who left her bed to feed the chickens. She usually made the farmer wish that he had never been born by the time Nancy and Bert sat down to their breakfast of fruit and country bacon and eggs and waffles and maple syrup, an almost unbelievable breakfast when Nancy compared it with the very plain fare at the nurses' home. Nancy enjoyed her food with an honest heartiness which made Bert look at her and marvel.

"Yes, I know I am greedy!" She made a face at him. "But I fancy you would be greedy, too, if you had eaten the meals I have eaten for almost two years. When I have wanted anything good I have had to read a cook book. I should like to prescribe a breakfast of fruit and country sausage and omelet and waffles for every one in the United States. We shouldn't have so many anarchists if more people ate such breakfasts."

Bert shuddered and nibbled a bit of dry toast.

"Thank heaven you don't make our laws!" he exclaimed fervently. "Eating's a horrid bore!"

"It's a great pleasure." Nancy took another waffle. "They are perfectly wonderful, Hilda," she told the smiling maid. "I have read the recipes of lots of waffles, but I never ate any as good as these."

She and Bert found that they did not agree on many subjects. Bert had never met a girl who expressed herself as frankly as Nancy Yates. He could never tell what she would say. She made him think of a Christmas stocking, full of mystery. There was, for instance, the day when they were on the lake in the canoe. Nancy was paddling while Bert leaned lazily back and quoted free verse.

Nancy swung the canoe into a little inlet, and pushing her hair from her forehead, leaned back, also, but she did not quote *vers libre*. She talked stern prose.

"I suppose," she began slowly, as if she were choosing her words very carefully and were afraid that she might get one which did not match or would fade, "I should have a certain respect for you because you aren't a 'cupboard lover,' but I haven't. I think you are a stupid idiot!"

Bert almost upset the canoe in his indignation and surprise. "Nancy Yates!" He was wounded in his most vital spot, his conceit.

"I do!" She nodded her head firmly. "Here is the Duchess all ready to adore you and give you everything she has, and you can't be decent to her."

"I am decent to her! I——"

But she would not listen to his defense and went on as though he had never opened his mouth. "You never came to the hospital until I called you up and hinted that the Duchess might spend some of her money. I hate people who are always taking and taking and never giving anything. Sponges! I should think you would like to show the Duchess that you are fond of her, pet her a bit. She's crazy to have some one make a little love to her. She is capable of leaving her money to——"

"What?" Bert sat up at that and stared at her in consternation. "She hasn't said anything to you, has she?"

"She hasn't said anything, but I don't always need words to read a woman's mind. I asked her the other day if you ever had built anything and——"

"An architect can't afford to make mistakes," Bert told her quickly. "The work of an architect is always out in plain sight where every one can see it. A doctor and a nurse are lucky. They can put their mistakes under ground, but an architect—— You just wait!" he broke off to say hotly. "And some day I shall build something that's really worth while!"

"I hope so." But in spite of the hope there was a scorn in Nancy's voice which made Bert flush and ask sulkily what difference it made to her anyway.

Nancy told him promptly. "If I were going to marry you," she began, and was stopped right there, for Bert jumped again and almost fell out of the canoe.

"Marry me!" he exploded, and he looked at Nancy as if he feared she had a minister and a license up her sleeve.

"If I were going to marry you," Nancy went on serenely, although her right dimple peeped out impishly, "I'd insist that you should build something at once, if it wasn't anything more than the new chicken house your aunt wants. And I should insist that you pay more attention to your aunt. It isn't just because I want you to have her money, but—— Have you ever thought," she demanded suddenly, "what it must mean to a woman to be alone in the world with a couple of million dollars and a good-for-nothing nephew? How would you like it?" Nancy generally made her illustrations personal.

"I'd like it darned well! And as for marrying me——!" He looked at her, and his voice was very determined—"I don't think I ever gave you any encouragement."

"I don't need encouragement. Girls don't now. If they want anything they just take it. Men don't do all of the choosing any more. I should say they didn't! And if I want to marry you, you haven't a chance in the world unless you hurry and marry some other girl. And even then there is the divorce court to help a poor working girl." She laughed. She was quite enjoying her little talk with Bert, although Bert was staring at her with horrified eyes.

In the Bohemian circles which he frequented Bert had heard considerable about a girl's right to choose,

but he had never been chosen, and he was not sure that he liked it. It was awfully flattering to a fellow, but—a shiver chased down his spine—it was awfully embarrassing. He liked—had liked—Nancy Yates, and his aunt liked her, but if she talked like that, really he would have to go back to Waloo.

"Only I don't think I want to marry you," went on Nancy as if Bert were on a bargain counter and she could take him or leave him as she pleased. "You haven't anything of your own, not a single solitary thing but the hope that the Duchess will leave you her money. It would be a risk to marry you."

"Well, upon my word!" Bert had never been talked to as Nancy was talking to him. He did not like it, and yet she did make him sit up and stare at her and feel somewhere in his indolent selfish body a desire to show her that he was worth marrying. Why! she was only a nurse, a student nurse in his grandfather's hospital and—— It was outrageous, that was what it was, perfectly outrageous! He glared at Nancy, who smiled sweetly and showed him her left dimple.

"If I made love to your aunt she would leave me her money," she went on gently, and Bert felt suffocated. "Or I could get her to endow that children's hospital you were afraid of or a school of finance for business women. Yes, I could!" she repeated firmly. "The Duchess would do anything for the person who would pet her and show her

that he loved her. I don't know what kind of an architect you are," she went on in that unpleasantly impersonal way, "but I do know that you are a darned poor business man to neglect your aunt as you have done. If I were you," she paused so that he might swallow some of his indignation and listen to what she would do if she were he. "If I were you I'd turn over a new leaf and make a little love to the Duchess, first, because you owe it to her, and second, because it would be good business. You can't be sure of anything, you know, until you have it in your own hands. B-r-r, it's getting cold, isn't it!" She shivered and took up her paddle, but first she looked at him again. "You don't take after your aunt at all, do you?" She seemed to think the worse of him for that, for she added with a sigh: "She is such a wonderful business woman!"

At that very moment the wonderful business woman was reading a letter from a consulting chemist, and after she had read it she took Nancy's father's old journal from her pocket and turned the pages until she found one which had been well thumbed. She read a few lines, and then she looked at the chemist's letter again. She nodded her gray head.

"I'll do it!" she said firmly. "I'll do it for Nancy and Bert. Nancy will like him better if he has his own business, and while architecture is all very well for some men, rosewater will be better for Bert."

XXVI

"I DO wish, Bert, that you had studied chemistry instead of architecture!" The Duchess spoke as if she were dissatisfied with Bert's choice of a profession.

They had just finished luncheon and were sitting on the big glassed-in veranda which overlooked the lake. Nancy and Bert were trying to decide whether to spend their afternoon on clock golf, or a walk along the lake shore or a motor ride through the pines which ran back for miles and miles, to the very North Pole, for all they knew. Bert had quite recovered from Nancy's plain speaking, but he kept a watchful eye upon her, as if he were not at all sure what she would do next. Bert did not intend to be married without having a word to say about the bride. Nancy's methods were so open and her speech so plain that he suspected her. He wished that there were another man at the farm, even another girl would be a help, for he believed firmly in the old saying which told him that there is safety in number. The Duchess was still busy with her mail, and it was from one of her letters, a most businesslike communication, that she looked at her nephew and shook her head and decided that she was not satisfied with him.

"Oh, no, you don't," Bert answered lazily.

"Young Andy Macnamara is a chemist. You wouldn't wish me to copy young Andy."

"He is? A chemist?" The Duchess drew her brows together in an awful frown. "I had forgotten."

"Much good it does him," Bert rambled on. "He hasn't any intention of working at chemistry or anything else. Now I work at architecture!" He drew himself up proudly, and when his aunt and Nancy refused to be impressed he told them again what he did: "I work!"

"We heard you." Nancy's voice was sugar sweet. "But we don't quite believe you. We want proof, don't we, Duchess? Hello," her quick eye had seen a cloud of dust on the road beyond the big stone pillars which told passers-by that they marked the entrance to the farm. "Company is coming."

"What an inconvenient time," fussed the Duchess, putting down her businesslike letter to look in the direction pointed by Nancy's finger. "If people wish to come around noon they should arrive before instead of after lunch. Why, upon my soul! It's old Andy Macnamara!" She could scarcely believe her eyes, although a keener, more serviceable pair, had never been made.

"And young Andy Macnamara!" cried Nancy, almost too joyfully to please the Duchess.

"And Corice Macnamara!" The Fates were sending Bert not only the masculine help he had wished for but feminine help also. No wonder his voice sounded joyful, too joyful, for the Duchess

turned her hawklike gaze upon him. Surely Bert was not interested in Corice. That would not be at all according to her plans. "In fact, the whole,—ahem,—Macnamara family!"

The Duchess ran to Nancy as the car came dashing up the long driveway. "I don't know what they want," she said in a hurried whisper. "But I suppose they have come for you. You shan't go!"

"Of course I shan't!" smiled Nancy. "You invited me for two weeks and we have spent only nine out of the fourteen days. As I understand this visit it is not to terminate without the consent of the party of the first part as well as the party of the second part."

"Well, Myrtice!" The King had climbed the steps, and he offered a careless hand to the Duchess, who did not move one step to greet him.

"Well, Andy!" She allowed him that much. That did not commit her to anything.

"Hello, Nancy Yates!" And the King took her hands and held them far longer than the Duchess thought was necessary. Neither did the Duchess like the lingering greeting which the reprieved Bert was giving to Corice as she stood laughing with him beside the big car. "We've missed you. Andy said Waloo was a howling wilderness without you."

"Did you?" Nancy asked young Andy to confirm the report about him, and she squeezed the old King's fingers as she did, so that he would know that she had no real lack of confidence in his statement but just considered it good business to have it certified.

Young Andy laughed. "Something like that," he admitted. "It seemed unusually empty without Miss Hawks and——

Miss Hawks snorted contemptuously. "If you were coming why didn't you come earlier?" she asked with true Hawks' hospitality. "We have lunch at one o'clock."

"We had ours at twelve to-day. Don't you worry, Myrtice, we don't need anything to eat. We are on our way north," he kindly explained as if he knew that the Duchess was all but dying of curiosity; perhaps he did know. "I'm taking the youngsters on an inspection trip to show them the different properties. We are going on to Marathon from here. Don't you bother your head about us, Myrtice, just enjoy our call." And he laughed and pinched Nancy Yates' arm to let her know how well he understood the Duchess, or how well he thought he understood the Duchess, which was not quite the same thing.

"Marathon? That's where you sent young Jensen," murmured the Duchess, and she looked significantly at Corice who was still loitering in the driveway with Bert.

When she heard the name of Jensen, Nancy Yates unconsciously tried to do two things at once, to listen to the complaints which young Andy was making about the road which had been so slow to bring him to her at the farm and to what the King was saying about Rolf Jensen.

"Yes," he told the Duchess. "That's where Jensen is. I was all right about him, Myrtice. He's

just as capable and reliable and sane as I thought he was. That is one thing I pride myself on, my judgment in picking men—and women, too," he added thoughtfully, his judging eyes on Nancy Yates. "Before I was out of the anesthetic at that hospital I knew that young Jensen was just the doctor I needed for the people up at Marathon. It's a peculiar situation up there, a bunch of Letts and Lithuanians and Finns and Polacks who came here thinking the streets were paved with gold, and when they found the paving was much the same as in the old country they got suspicious. They're ripe material for the I. W. W.'s. A lot of them haven't taken out their naturalization papers. They don't want to be citizens. But they've got to be Americans if they work for me and they've got to want to be. I don't believe in driving them. If a man really wants a thing that's the thing he values when he gets it. So the men who work close with the miners, the lawyer, the minister, the school-teacher and the doctor—especially the doctor because he gets closer to them—have got to be able to understand them. We've had a lot of accidents at Marathon, too many, and there were other hurts and bruises, mental ones, which were harder to heal. Jensen knew his business, Minor guaranteed that, and I could see that he was the kind of a chap, young as he is, who can help to cure the twist in a man's mind. He comes of idealistic stock. You know they used to call his old grandfather King of Little Denmark. Jensen's chuck full of theories, and as he tries them out he's

going to develop common sense. The war gave him responsibility and experience in handling men and a healthy vision. We talked it all over while I was in the hospital. Lord knows, we had time enough! And I'm smart enough to know, Myrtice, that mines nor factories nor anything else will be run in the old fashion. We've got to look after our working people on a different basis, make good Americans and contented men out of them, or we'll go bust. When young Jensen has shaken down he'll be invaluable. The men trust him. They know his father came from the old country, just as they did. Some of them knew his honest old grandfather. They know he thinks he is a socialist, but he isn't as much of a socialist as he used to be. All young fellows have to go through that phase. Even Andy——" But he did not tell her about Andy, for he returned to Rolf. "I like him and I trust him. And I know he'll shake down all right. He'll have to, for human beings are sure to show a man how faulty theories can be. Jensen talks to the men like a Dutch uncle, and they take it from him. They wouldn't take it from me. You bet they wouldn't! No, I didn't make any mistake in Jensen. He's all right!"

"H—m," was all the Duchess had to say to that, for she was not interested in Rolf Jensen. Rolf was out of sight while plainly in sight was her nephew, who was actually sauntering down to the lake with Corice, leaving Nancy talking to young Andy, who was perched on the porch railing. The arrangement was not one which pleased the Duchess, but she did

not see how she could change it just then. Corice Macnamara was all very well, but she was not Nancy Yates, and the Duchess had set her heart on Nancy Yates as a wife for Bert. As for young Andy, the Duchess had not brought Nancy to the farm to chatter to him.

"Andy," she called sharply, when she had suffered in silence as long as she could, "why don't you run along and let Bert show you the new bathhouse? He built it himself," she told the King proudly.

"Some architect, isn't he?" The King winked at Nancy, who giggled. She could not help it. They were such a droll two with their grandson and their nephew. She scarcely knew which was the droller. "I suppose next he'll try his hand at a chicken run."

"You couldn't expect him to begin with a Woolworth building." The Duchess was quite blind to the royal joke.

"No, I couldn't. You've made a lot of changes here, Myrtice. It isn't much as it was in your father's time."

"Yes, I have improved it. Nancy,"—anything was better than to leave Nancy laughing and talking with young Andy—"you might show Mr. Macnamara how we've changed the garden."

"Show me." Young Andy was on his feet. "I adore gardens. Show me, and I'll tell granddad."

"Yes." The King settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "Show young Andy. I'm not so interested in gardens, especially in October gardens, as he is. And you might hunt up Corice and tell her

that in my young days it was considered only courteous for a girl to speak to the lady of the house before she gallivanted off with her nephew."

This was no better than the original arrangement, but the Duchess could not do anything without making herself ridiculous. She could only sit there and listen to old Andy Macnamara talk about the deplorable condition of the country and watch Nancy saunter away with young Andy or look down on Bert and Corice dawdling by the lake. She would not have been any more pleased if she had heard what young Andy was saying.

"Glad to see me?" he had demanded before Nancy had shown him so much as a withered carrot top. "Has the time dragged since you saw me? Have you been counting the minutes until you would see me again?"

"No, I haven't," she told him frankly, but she laughed. "I've been too comfortable and too lazy to count anything. But what have you been doing? Did you buy your alarm clock? And have you done what it told you to do?"

"I bought the clock, but I don't know how to set the darn thing. It never goes off when I ask it to, but granddad has warned me that it will be more obedient when we get back to Waloo. He has some new scheme on hand which is going to transform me into a captain of industry at once. I think myself I should begin as a private, but granddad insists on giving me a commission."

"I hope you'll make a good captain. It's a lot

easier to be a private. But that isn't the reason?" she looked at him suspiciously.

"Most certainly not! How you misjudge the rich and idle. You know very well that the reason I haven't taken my dinner pail into the working world is because I haven't yet found a job hard enough for my ability. Why should I do what any other fellow can do as well? No, indeed, mademoiselle, I'm looking for my own particular work. It's lying around somewhere marked plainly—'Andrew O. Macnamara, Junior.' I'll know it. I can read," he assured her when she looked doubtful. "Perhaps I'll find it up at Marathon. Jensen did. Granddad seems quite crazy about that young doctor. Did he impress you as the eighth wonder of the world?" he asked curiously.

She would have given anything if she could have kept the color from flooding her face for although young Andy's eyes were sleepy they could see when a girl's cheeks turned pink.

"He's splendid," she stammered. "And Doctor Minor has always said that he was clever. I should think it would make you ashamed to see what some men——"

"Shame," he interrupted. "I don't know that word!"

"Oh!" She turned away impatiently. It was all right to trifle a part of the time, but it was not all right to trifle all of the time.

He suddenly realized that even he could go too far, and his manner changed completely. "I'm a

fool," he said soberly. "But you know sometimes a chap talks a lot of rot just to cover up his real feelings. You gave me quite a jolt the other day. Honest, you did! I have been a footless sort of a creature, but I didn't realize that I had grown up enough to have things expected of me. I did buy that alarm clock, and as soon as I get back to Waloo I'm going to wind it and set it for seven o'clock. Seven A. M.," he repeated impressively. "You'll be surprised when you hear how hard I'm working on that little umbrella you asked me to make."

"I hope so. It's great fun making umbrellas; really it is! Of course mine is only a clumsy cotton affair——"

"Mine isn't!" eagerly. "Mine is going to be of real silk, soft and fine, of the very best quality and with the smartest kind of a handle. I hope you'll let me hold it over you when it's finished," he added impulsively, and he colored. "I don't know of any girl I'd rather hold it over!"

She looked up quickly. Was he serious? He looked serious and when he was serious he seemed quite reliable and dependable, but Nancy was woefully afraid that the serious moment would not grow into sixty, or even thirty.

"I'll have to see your umbrella first," she said slowly.

Before she had finished her sentence he had caught her hand which was hanging at her side, and squeezed it.

"Then I'm to understand that is an order?" His eyes danced.

Before she could tell him just what he could understand they heard a voice behind them, and there was the old King, big and powerful.

"You run back and talk to Myrtice, Andy," he said. "I want a few words with Nancy."

Andy shrugged his shoulders and swung around. He did not wish to talk to the Duchess, but he did not see how he could refuse.

"So this is Myrt's garden." The King looked at the dried remnants and could visualize what had been a really wonderful garden. "Anything Myrt undertakes is well done. That's why I want you to know that as soon as we get back to Waloo young Andy is going into business for himself."

"So is Bert!" And the Duchess shot out from the withered corn stalks in a most disconcerting fashion. The King frowned at her, and she frowned at him. "I've meant to tell you all day, Nancy, but just as I was ready we were interrupted."

The King knew instantly that he was the interruption. "That's fine," he said quickly. "Fine in Bert to go into business. But I was telling Nancy that young Andy is going to be president of a new breakfast food company. That was why I gave you that paper when I was at the hospital," he told Nancy, "to remind me about the formula."

"I knew it was breakfast food!" The Duchess was so triumphant that for a second she forgot her nephew. "You said it was chicken feed!" she told

Nancy scornfully. "Well, young Andy may have his corn, popped and compressed, I don't care, but Bert is going to work with rosewater and benzoin and——"

"It sounds like a hand lotion!" exclaimed Nancy, rather embarrassed to find herself the center of so many confidences. "It sounds like the lotion in my father's old journal."

"It is!" the Duchess said with frank honesty. "I told you that your father's journal showed ability but lacked efficiency. As soon as I read that prescription I saw the possibilities in it, and I made up my mind to make it as a surprise for you and Bert. Everything is arranged, and we'll begin to manufacture the middle of the month, to be ready for the millions of hands that are chapped every winter."

"Why— why——" There was no doubt that the Duchess had given Nancy the surprise she had planned, a big overwhelming surprise.

"I knew you'd never do anything with it," went on the Duchess feeling that possibly her explanation was a bit incomplete. "So I did it for you. Together we'll make a big thing out of it."

"Well, upon my word!" Nancy stared at her. She could not say another word. The Duchess had taken her breath completely from her.

"Of course I don't presume to question your business methods, Myrtice," the King said dryly, "but it would never occur to me to take a prescription from any man's journal——"

"I did it for Nancy!"

"And for Bert, you said. As I remarked I shouldn't presume to question the ethics of the case, but I should like to point out to Nancy that breakfast food is something which is used at least once a day in every home. I bought this new formula, bought it outright, and it's going to make big money."

"I don't presume to question your business methods, Andy," broke in the Duchess triumphantly, "but I must call your attention to the fact that I expect to share the profits of the 'Smooth as Velvet' lotion with the owner of the prescription. I don't intend to buy her out with any paltry sum. The profits will be shared by Nancy and Bert——"

"Nancy and Bert!" The King all but choked. "Nancy and Andy you mean?—God bless my soul! Look there!" And he broke off his impatient exclamation to raise his right arm until it pointed straight up to the blue sky where a flock of birds was flying in a V-shaped wedge. "Wild ducks!" he gasped. "I wish I had a gun! They told me over at Liberty, where we had lunch, that the ducks were as thick as flies. There's an island in your lake, Myrtice, where they stop on their way south. Lord! but I'd like to get some of them. Andy! Bert!" he called to the two young men, who, with Corice, were coming slowly toward them. "Look at that!"

They looked obediently. "By George!" exclaimed Andy.

"The devil!" muttered Bert.

"I want one!" squealed Corice. "I want one this minute! Hasn't any one a gun?"

"Haven't you anything that will shoot, Myrtice?" The King was leaning so far back that his equilibrium was in deadly peril.

"The only weapon I have in the house is the carving knife. It won't help you shoot ducks," the Duchess told him tartly.

"Just what you might expect in a house run by women. But, Bert, you must have a gun tucked away somewhere? No!" as Bert insisted that he hadn't even a toy pistol. "Those birds are going over to the island to rest for a few days. We've got to get some of them! You bet we have! What say, boys? We can send for two or three guns——"

"Four!" insisted Corice firmly.

"Five," laughed Nancy, who had never held a gun in her hand.

"Six guns. I suppose you want one, too, Myrtice? I'll go and get them myself. I'll run up to Marathon. We can go over to the island to-morrow night, and the next day, Myrtice, you can plan to have wild duck for dinner." As if the Duchess had been bothering over her menu! "I'm glad I came this way. I haven't been duck shooting for years. No, Andy," he looked meaningly from Andy to Nancy, "I don't wish you to go. You stay here and get ready. Bert can come with me."

"No, Bert can't!" exclaimed Bert's aunt, before Bert could say a word for himself. "Bert has company. It wouldn't be polite for him to go."

XXVII

THE little island, which was the birds' way station south, was in the upper end of the lake. It was not much of an island in regard to size, and it was covered with scrub pines and slim white birches. A mile of very deep and very cold water separated it from the mainland on one side and on the other there was a half mile channel and then a fringe of wild rice which grew wilder and wilder toward the north until it almost filled the channel as well as the long water finger which was thrust into the swamp.

Near the shore at one end of this green and white dot on a blue page was a cleared space and two cabins which the fishermen had built. They were rough log cabins, and the Duchess sniffed as she looked at them. The Duchess and Bert, with Bert's guests, had come from the farm in the launch on a scouting trip to help fill the time until the King should return with the guns. Instantly the guests were aware that the Duchess did not approve of the accommodations the island offered. If there had been an hotel clerk there she would have told him in plain terse words what she thought of them and demanded something better immediately. But as there was no hotel clerk on the island she had to content herself with shaking her head and murmuring that she for one, would not give up comfortable box

springs and eider downs for all the island had to offer, ducks included. But the young people looked at the cabins with very different eyes.

"Won't it be fun!" Nancy's eyes sparkled. "I've never slept in an abandoned log hut on an uninhabited island before."

"You won't sleep on this one," Andy prophesied. "Duck hunters are up long before the sun. You'll be turning out just about the time Miss Hawks is going to bed."

"Not really?" Nancy could not believe that even duck hunters would be obliged to rise as early as that."

He laughed. "Approximately. Now then," he went on soberly, "this is to be no gathering of the idle rich with spring beds and hot and cold water. This is to be a real man's outing, eh, Bert? And we'll get ready for it by sweeping out the cabins."

"And cutting pine boughs!" Nancy clapped her hands. "I've never slept on a bed of pine boughs in my life! I'm crazy to begin!"

"And cutting pine boughs," agreed Andy. "Shall we do our own cooking or borrow Miss Hawks' cook?"

"Didn't you say this was an honest to goodness man's camp? Of course we'll cook our own dinner and our own breakfast." Nancy sneered at the idea of borrowing any one's cook. "Don't I know all about diet cooking?"

"And didn't I take a course in domestic science?" demanded Corice. "All you men will have to do is

to catch the fish and shoot the ducks, and we'll live like kings!"

"I'll bet you are a good cook!" Bert was all admiration when he heard that Corice had taken a course in domestic science. "I imagine you do everything well," he added hastily, as he felt his aunt's eagle eye boring into him.

The Duchess did not approve of this hunting party. It lacked everything to her, and she would not chaperone it. She did not see how old Andy Macnamara dared to expose himself to the sciatica and the lumbago and the rheumatism and pleurisy and neuralgia and possibly the pneumonia which must be lurking among the pine and the birches. She valued her own health too highly to subject it to such an insidious hostile army. She would speak plainly to Nancy and to Bert, tell them her wishes again, and then she would have to leave the rest to Fate. Nancy laughed softly when she was spoken to plainly.

"Dear Duchess," and she put her arm around the Duchess and hugged her, "you can't keep your nephew wrapped up in cotton wool all of his life, which is very lucky for him. I should think you would be glad to have him think for himself."

"I should be," the Duchess told her indignantly, "if he would think the right way. But the Macnamaras,—you heard for yourself what kind of a man old Andy is, buying for a song what will make him millions. And I believe in heredity."

"I don't!" Nancy was quite positive. "That is,

not much. I believe more in environment and education. Your nephew is all right," she was kind enough to add, "and young Andy Macnamara is all right, and as for Corice, she's a dear! I don't wonder men fall in love with her."

"I can't be rude to your guests," Bert said when the Duchess talked plainly to him. "It wouldn't be the thing," he stubbornly insisted, although the Duchess tried to make him see that the Macnamaras were not her guests. They could not be guests when they had never been invited, and she never had invited them to the farm. Never!

She would not let the young people wander off by twos that evening, but kept them playing bridge by the living-room fire where she had them under her eye. When she thought of the next night when they would be away from her watchful eye she groaned.

"What a funny old thing Miss Hawks is," Corice said to Nancy when they were upstairs, and Nancy lingered before she said good-night.

"She is a careful business woman," corrected Nancy with a chuckle.

"It's the same thing," yawned Corice. "I think Bert is perfectly wonderful to put up with all of her silly fussing."

"If he didn't put up with it he would lose a very, very pretty penny."

"As if that were the reason," scornfully. "Bert Wadsley isn't a bit mercenary. He's an artist, you know, and artists never think of money."

"H—m," was all Nancy said to that, but she remembered a telephone chat she had had with Bert Wadsley, and the prompt reply he had made to it.

"He's perfectly devoted to his fussy old aunt," Corice insisted, and Nancy kept her opinion in regard to that to herself, too. Occasionally Nancy could hold her tongue.

The King came back shortly after lunch and in the car with him and the guns was a tall slim figure which made Nancy Yates open her mouth and her eyes and exclaim "Oh!" as if she had been pinched. And then she rubbed her eyes because she could not believe that they had seen what they told her they had. But the others were exclaiming warmly: "Why, Doctor Jensen! How do you do?" so of course they had.

"Very well, thank you," Rolf replied politely. And he shook hands with every one, leaving Nancy until the last.

Nancy's eyes were on Corice, and she caught her breath as Rolf spoke to Corice. What did Corice think of the man her grandfather had chosen for her, she wondered. Corice was blushing and smiling as if she thought a lot. Nancy tossed her head. Pooh, what did she care!

Rolf seemed to have forgotten that he had ever said that he hoped he never would see Nancy Mary Yates again, for he was quite unhurried in his greeting. "You are looking very well," he said, as he reluctantly released her fingers, which had been hot and then cold and then hot again while he held

them. As he was a doctor it was natural that he should ask after her health, especially after he had held her hot and cold hand.

"You are looking rather well yourself," she said with a quick breath. And he did look well. "Marathon evidently agrees with you."

"It does. It would agree with any one, for it's a wonderful place. And the people—poor bewildered creatures! Even you would wish to help them if you could see them!"

"I wish I could!" The words had not crossed her lips before she was sorry that they were so fervent, and she colored. She would have qualified the impulsive sentence, but the King had finished his argument with the Duchess and bustled over to ask Nancy if she didn't think they had better start at once.

"We want time to look over the island before dark!" If eager anticipation is any sign of youth the King was the youngest member of the party. He could not wait a minute. He absolutely refused to be intimidated by the lumbago or the rheumatism or the neuralgia which the Duchess prophesied would seize him if he once put foot on the island, and he absolutely refused to wait until after dinner, although the Duchess offered him a very early dinner. He preferred the burned coffee and the scorched potatoes and the cindery bacon which the Duchess told him would be all he would get on the island. In no time at all he had his hunters and their equipment in the launch.

"Sorry you won't go with us, Myrtice!" he called back to her, as she stood frowning on the shore.

"H—m!" snorted the Duchess. "You don't want to forget, Andy Macnamara, that you aren't as young as you were once. I hope you don't freeze to death!" she called solicitously. "It's getting colder every minute. Nancy, pull that sweater up around your neck! And, Bert, put on your heavy coat at once!"

XXVIII

THERE was a surprise waiting for them on the island, a surprise for every one, but especially for Nancy Yates. When they left the launch and went up to the cabins which had been cleaned and furnished with quantities of freshly cut pine boughs, they found one cabin occupied by two men. One of the men jumped up and stared in amazement.

"Why, Nancy Yates!" he exclaimed.

"Why, George Yardley!" Imagine finding George on the little island. Nancy would not have been much more surprised if she had found George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. She could scarcely believe that this man, who was holding her hands in such a warm, eager grasp, actually was George Yardley. "What ever are you doing here?" She simply had to know.

"We came for ducks. A motor boat brought us over from Liberty and is to come for us Saturday. I suppose your friends cut those beds? We were wondering who had been so kind. It seems mighty good to see you again, Nance! I never thought I should run across you up here."

"No more did I expect to see you. I thought you were safe behind the bars in the Mifflin Bank. Do you know Mr. Macnamara and Miss Macnamara and Mr. Andrew Macnamara and Mr. Wadsley?

You do know Doctor Jensen," she reminded him. "He entertained you at tea at the Waloo, you know. George is an old friend from Mifflin," she explained to the Macnamaras. "Just imagine meeting him on this tiny dot of an island!"

"Humph," grunted Mr. Macnamara, and Mr. Andrew Macnamara muttered something, for they had the same thought, born of the very pink cheeks and the odd little quiver in her voice with which Nancy had greeted her old friend from Mifflin. The Macnamaras understood that "friend" is a word which can cover a multitude of relations.

George introduced them to his companion, Ned Barnes, an old college chum, who had hunted ducks on the island before and knew exactly the best place to find the birds. They listened to Ned with hungry ears, at least the King listened hungrily. Nancy looked from one to another of the little group about the big bonfire. Here they all were, King Moneybags, Prince Moneybags, Princess Moneybags, and the two poor but honest men who had loved her—*had* loved her. She didn't suppose that either of them cared for her now, and she wondered why on earth Fate had brought them all together on one of the smallest islands in the state. It was strange and must mean something.

"You'll have to be on your guard," she warned Nancy Yates, "or you'll do something you'll be sorry for."

And because she was so sure that Nancy Yates was on guard, she slipped over beside George to ask

him about Uncle Ben and Aunt Alice and Doris and the other twenty-nine hundred and ninety-seven people in Mifflin. From the other side of the fire Rolf watched her with a frown. He remembered how eagerly George had talked to Nancy the day he entertained them at tea and how pink Nancy's cheeks were as she had listened. They were pink now. Had Nancy been in love with George all of the time? And had she chattered about a prince just to deceive him? He wished he knew. But the King did not give any of them much time to talk or to wish over the fire.

"Now then, young people!" he exclaimed arbitrarily. "We have to get up before the ducks. Godfrey, but it's cold!" as he stepped away from the fire. "Must be twenty degrees colder than it was." He shivered.

"Forty, I'd say!" Nancy shivered, too. "I'm glad the Duchess made me bring that extra coat. Suppose we should have frost before morning? What would happen?"

They laughed at her. Cold as it was, it was too early in the season for frost. The King told her it was ridiculous to think of frost.

"Have it your own way, but the first frost has to come sometime," she insisted.

She was sure that she had not had half of forty winks on her bed of freshly cut pine boughs before she was called. If it had been cold when she went to bed it was freezing when she got up, and her

fingers were so stiff that they fumbled with shoelaces and buttons.

"I never knew it could be so cold!" Her teeth chattered, and she had to stop to blow on her fingers. "I almost wish I were the Duchess tucked so cozily under an eider down."

"So do I!" Corice blew on her fingers. "I don't care half as much for duck shooting as I did."

But when they went out and found a bright fire crackling in front of the cabins and saw the big pot of coffee which Rolf had made they were glad that they were not tucked under any eider down.

"This was our job!" scolded Nancy, but she was ready to take the big tin cup full of steaming coffee. "But I'm awfully glad that you didn't leave it for us to do."

"H—sh!" cautioned the King. "You'll scare the ducks!"

They laughed at him, but they were quiet. It was too cold, and they were still too sleepy to care for conversation. They drank the coffee and then walked single file down the narrow trail which led to what Ned Barnes had said was the best place for ducks.

Dawn even had not yet come. The stars were still bright in the sky, and a thin, pale, little moon hung among them. Nancy put out her hand as if to feel the way. It was caught immediately in the fingers of the man at her heels, and he held it close and warm. Her breath came quickly, and she stopped for just a second, but she did not try to re-

lease her fingers. How strong the hand which held them was—strong and protecting and warm. A girl would never be afraid if her hand was held in such a strong and protecting, such a warm clasp. Her fingers nestled closer in the strong palm as if they were glad to be there.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Ned Barnes, all too soon for two of the hunters. "By thunder!" he cried. "The lake is frozen!"

"It isn't!" They did not believe him, and they crowded close to the water to see for themselves as well as they could in the dim gray light. Sure enough there was a skim of ice running out over the channel of deep water. How far it ran they could not see.

"What did I tell you?" Nancy asked triumphantly. She had taken her fingers from the protecting hand and was holding them in her pocket as if she were afraid that they would stray again if they were not kept in the prison of a pocket.

"H—sh!" exclaimed the King, and he held up a warning hand as he heard a flutter among the wild rice. The early frost might be unseasonable, but ducks were what he had come for. He would discuss the early frost after he had attended to the ducks.

Hours later they trooped back to the cabins in the pale morning light with a dozen ducks and huge appetites. Nancy fried the bacon and eggs, Corice unpacked the bread and butter, and Rolf raked the ashes for the potatoes he had tucked under the coals. The potatoes were done to a turn. Never had food

tasted so delicious. They ate and ate until nothing was left.

"I wonder what Myrtice Hawks will say now!" The King gloated over the dozen ducks. "She didn't think we would get one, did she? Now, boys and girls, we've got what we came for, and we'll move right along. It isn't getting any warmer. We don't want to pick up any of that sciatica or neuralgia that Myrtice was so afraid of. I never knew it to be so cold in October—the middle of October!"

The King himself carried the ducks to the launch. They were surprised to find that Jack Frost had tied their boat fast to the shore.

"H—m!" frowned the King, and he looked puzzled as if an enemy had taken advantage of him.

"Wouldn't it be funny if we really were frozen in?" laughed Corice. She spoke to Bert, but it was her grandfather who answered her.

"Very funny, extremely ludicrous," he said with gruff sarcasm. "And also highly improbable. The ice isn't any thicker than tissue paper, is it, Jensen?"

"Not much. Just too thick to swim through and not half thick enough to walk on," Rolf told him as he broke the thin film. "But why should we worry? We have the boat!"

"Of course we have the boat!" As if the King would have allowed himself to be on an island without a boat. "Start your engine, Bert. We might as well go!"

But Bert's best effort, which left him breathless and red-faced, could not persuade the engine to

start. It would begin bravely enough—"Sputter—putter—utter—ut"—and stop. Not another word would it say. The King was disgusted.

"You haven't any business trying to run a motor boat if you can't even start the motor," he said irritably. "Andy, you try!"

Andy tried until he was red-faced and breathless, too, but the engine would say no more for Andy than it would for Bert. "Sputter—putter—utter—ut" was the extent of its conversation. You know how stubborn a motor can be? This particular motor did not care a button whether the King wished to leave the island or not.

"And you've been running a car ever since the law would let you!" the King said to his grandson in his most intimate family manner. He wheeled around to frown at George Yardley, who stood a little apart with a grin on his face. "When did you say your boat was coming for you?"

"Saturday afternoon."

"And this is Wednesday! We would be dead twice, once from starvation and once from freezing by Saturday afternoon. This is ridiculous—absolutely ridiculous!" frowned the King, who had never found himself beyond the reach of telegraphs and telephones and the aid of expert chauffeurs. He felt helpless until he remembered the Duchess. "Your aunt will send for us," he told Bert, and his face brightened.

"I don't see how she can." Bert did not share the King's confidence in his aunt. "She hasn't any boat.

By Jove, it's a funny situation!" And he dared to grin at Corice.

The King glared at him. "Funny!" he sneered. "It isn't my idea of humor." And he turned his back on the boat which had betrayed him and stalked back to the fire. "Better gather up the fragments, Corice!" He pointed to a biscuit lying on a tin plate. "You'll be glad enough of the crumbs before you are through with this!" he prophesied gloomily.

"There are the ducks," suggested Nancy. "We can't starve while we can shoot ducks."

Nancy was conscious of a great surprise and a greater, far greater, disappointment. She had thought that money was the most powerful force in the world, strong enough to move anything, and yet here was one of the richest men in the Northwest—Why old Andy Macnamara and young Andy and Bert must represent millions! And they could not start a motor. They were prisoners on this tiny little island just as if they did not have a penny piece between them. Their millions were powerless to help them. It was confusing. Nancy could not see how old Andy Macnamara had ever become a king if this was the way he met a crisis.

"You must do something," she said impatiently to young Bert and Andy. "Mr. Macnamara can't stay here. He will catch his death of cold!" She sounded quite like the Duchess as she stood shivering on the shore, for it was cold.

Young Andy shook his head. He was sorry, awfully sorry, but he could not do a single thing. The

motor just would not run. Bert could do nothing, either. Nancy turned away from them with an impatient shrug. How useless money was. Why it could do nothing, just nothing at all!

"There must be some way for us to get across." She turned her back to millions and faced poverty as represented by Ned Barnes and George Yardley and Rolf Jensen. "Can't one of you make that motor go? You used to know a lot about gas engines, George."

XXIX

GEORGE proved that he still knew a lot about gas engines, and that the time he had spent tinkering the motor of his little yellow roadster had not been wasted, for after he had fussed with this and tightened that the obstinate motor broke into a cheery chatter—"Tut—tut—tut" which promised to continue indefinitely.

"Humph," muttered the King. "I am glad there is some one in this party with an ounce of brains. I told you we would get away all right."

"Yes, you did," Nancy murmured to Nancy Yates. "But I should like to know how you would have managed it if it hadn't been for the poor bank clerk. I've made a big discovery to-day, Nancy Mary Yates, I've learned that money isn't half as powerful as brains!"

"It was just luck," George said modestly. "I just happened to strike the trouble. That was all."

"All!" roared the King. "It was knowledge, expert knowledge. I want you to come with us, you and your friend. I shan't trust myself in a motor boat with a man who can't start a motor!" And he looked straight at Bert before he glanced at young Andy and snorted contemptuously. "You and your friend come with us."

He stubbornly refused to leave the island unless

George took command of the boat, and George had to stop being a duck hunter and become a navigator. Christian charity could do nothing else.

The Duchess received them as if they had risen from the dead. And it pleased Nancy to see that Bert hugged and kissed his aunt and let her cling to him. The Duchess had been uneasy as soon as she saw the skim of ice, and she had telephoned to Liberty for a boat. She had been afraid of Bert's motor. But the men at Liberty had laughed at her. They said it was a joke to think that ice would freeze thick enough in October to keep any man, especially old Andy Macnamara, on any island. The Duchess had wished many times that she had equipped the island with a wireless station before she had let Bert go on to it. She hoped that they had all had a lesson, and that now they would stay on the mainland and let other people shoot their ducks.

"There, there, Myrtice!" The King spoke soothingly and a trifle patronizingly. "There isn't any good in crying over spilt milk. You should know that. And we are all right, and we got our ducks. What more do you want?"

"That's all very well for you to say, Andy Macnamara," she hiccoughed, still clinging to Bert's sleeve. "But you didn't stand on that cold porch all morning watching the lake with a fieldglass. Girls, you must go right to bed! Shouldn't they, Doctor Jensen? With hot water bottles and hot lemonade?"

"I don't think such strenuous remedies are neces-

sary yet." The Doctor laughed. "We had a good fire and a lot of wraps. I don't think any one will take cold. I am sorry that you were worried."

"It really was the greatest fun, Duchess," declared Nancy. "And wasn't George clever? We would be on that island now if it hadn't been for George Yardley!" And she expressed so much admiration for George that he flushed and wriggled uncomfortably.

"We shan't forget what he's done," promised the King. "I never forget the people who do things for me, and you certainly did something, George, when you saved my life and the lives of my relatives and friends. Godfrey, Myrtice, think what it would have meant to the Stock Exchange if I had frozen to death on that damned little island of yours! No, sir, I shan't forget you!" And he nodded his head at George and beamed at him in a manner which quite justified George in dizzily imagining himself the president of a city trust company instead of a teller in a country bank.

Andy and Bert and even Rolf Jensen looked at George and their six eyes were as green as the Emerald Isle. Each one of them wondered why he could not have been lucky enough to make that obstinate little motor chatter. Of course each one of them knew that, given time, he could have made the motor chatter, but the fact remained that George had done it first, and the laurels belonged where they were being showered, on George.

"Well," the King was restless as soon as he re-

membered the Stock Exchange, and he jumped up suddenly. "We can't trespass on your hospitality any longer, Myrtice. We must go on to Marathon. There may be a blizzard to-night that will block the roads. I don't care to take any chances in a country which will freeze a lake in October. Get your hat, Corice. Ready, Andy? Jensen? Nancy, you and Myrtice and Bert had better come with us." He was impatient to be gone. The very thought of a blizzard in October made him eager to get away before it could come and catch him.

"I'm not afraid of a little snow," the Duchess told him scornfully. The Duchess had recovered her courage, her backbone was as stiff as it had ever been as she laughed at the King. "It isn't going to snow and even if it were Nancy Yates is my guest, you know."

"That is no reason why she should be snowed up miles from anywhere. She doesn't plan to spend the winter here, does she? You know what this northern country can do in a night, Nancy. Better not take any chances." There was a twinkle in his eye as he generously presented Nancy with this piece of advice, but there was no twinkle in the Duchess' eye as she stuttered that she guessed she could get Nancy Yates back to Waloo when her visit was over. She and Bert!

The two were so intent on their argument that they did not notice that they had been left alone in the big living room in front of the crackling log fire.

Bert had followed Corice when she obediently went for her things.

"I wish you didn't have to go," he said discontentedly. Bert had discovered that Corice furnished him with the very best kind of protection against surprising Nancy Yates, and he had a rapidly growing feeling that Corice might protect him from other girls as well. "It will be deadly stupid here without you!"

"You will have Nancy Yates," Corice reminded him gently, for as Nancy Yates had seemed enough for the others she thought that Nancy Yates would be enough for Bert.

But she was not enough for Bert, and he told Corice so quite frankly.

"Nancy Yates may be all very well,—Aunt Myrt thinks she made the world,—but she is a bit too unexpected for me. You would never believe the things she has said to me! She isn't a bit like you!" he said firmly, and he told the truth. Nancy Yates was not a bit like Corice Macnamara and never would be. "I suppose she is a nice little thing, but, well, you know——"

Nancy had slipped out to see, perhaps, if there was any sign of a blizzard blocking the road which ran back to Waloo, and George had followed her. George had not told her yet that he had had his salary raised again, and he wished Nancy to know of his luck.

"You were wonderful, George!" she exclaimed eagerly. "Just wonderful." But when she turned

around to look at the wonderful George she found herself staring into Rolf Jensen's blue eyes.

"Mr. Macnamara called George," he explained. "I suppose he is going to reward him with a million or two, and then you can marry him and be happy ever after. It is a good thing you turned me down," he went on with an odd, impersonal manner, as if he were speaking of any one in the world but Nancy Yates and Rolf Jensen. "You wouldn't like Marathon as well as you do Waloo, although Marathon is a decent enough town. But it is ugly, and the country is bleak, and the people—they aren't all Americans yet, you know, they are still Lithuanians and Finns and Letts. I don't suppose you would understand them at all. You wouldn't care to understand them for they are poor and ignorant. I ran across some of grandfather's old people the other day. They still speak of him as the King of Little Denmark." His lips curved in a scornful smile before he straightened them and said again in that odd, impersonal voice: "It is just as well you turned me down. Old Mr. Macnamara will make a prince out of George, and you can marry him and have your wish, too."

"Marry George Yardley!" She stared at him, and all the color in her face was not due to the frost in the air. "I'm not going to marry George! I can't! He is engaged to Doris. He told me last night. And I'm glad! They suit each other perfectly. I should say I'm not going to marry George Yardley!"

"Whom are you going to marry then?" His voice shook just the least little bit as he begged her

to tell him whether young Andy or Bert was to be her prince. He winced as he remembered what had happened once when she had asked him whom she was going to marry.

The lovely color deepened in Nancy's cheeks, and she laughed softly. She knew, she had known ever since that walk in the darkness, down the trail on the little island, when her fingers had nestled so comfortably and so safely in a man's broad palm.

"I am going to marry you!" She tried to convey the information saucily, but she faltered because he just stood and looked at her—stared at her would possibly be more correct—as if he could not believe that she was going to marry him. "You said I should! Remember?" she went on in a shaking voice. "I didn't want to care for you!" And she spoke stormily, as if she blamed him for her inability to do as she pleased. "I vowed I wouldn't spoil your future! I tried my best to have you marry Kitty Marrison or Corice Macnamara. They could have helped you, but I—I—," her voice trailed into a wail of regret—"can't do anything for you!"

"Can't you!" He laughed scornfully, as he caught her hands and held them in the clasp which had been so strong and so warm in the cold dawn.

"It wasn't anything I ever planned," insisted Nancy a bit tearfully, for she just had to make him understand that it was not her fault that she was going to marry him. "I didn't want to care for you!"

"I know," he said, and his voice had a note in it

which she had never heard before, a deep rich note which made her quiver in every nerve. "You wanted to marry a prince and live in luxury. Poor little Nancy girl to have her beautiful story spoiled and lose her heart to a poor doctor, who can't give her anything but work and worry and——"

"Yes, he can give me something else!" She put her fingers on his lips as if she did not care to hear the list of things which he said he could give her. "He can give me what I want the most of all—what every girl in the world deep down in her heart really wants—the chance to make a home with the man I love."

She was in his arms, there behind the frost-bitten lilac hedge, before she had finished, and the last words were whispered sobbingly against his cheek.

"We'll do it together, honey girl!" Rolf promised chokingly. "We'll make that home together."

"Together!" She could only breath the word between his kisses. And for a wonder it did not make her cross. Indeed, the very mention of it made her face radiant. What a wonderful word it was! Oh, Uncle Ben was exactly right. "That sounds like heaven," she murmured.

"You can marry me to-morrow," went on Rolf eagerly. "If you once see Marathon I'm afraid you'll change your mind," he added ruefully.

"Silly!" She touched his cheek with rebuking fingers. "I'd love to marry you to-morrow, but there is my work. It isn't finished yet! I think I'd better go back, but it won't be for so very long."

She sighed because it had to be for any time. "The very day I have my diploma in my right hand you shall put a wedding ring on my left hand," she promised, her eyes sparkling dewily, and both dimples flashing. "And I'll be glad and proud and happy to have it there!" she exclaimed from the very bottom of her heart.

"You dear—you darling!"

And he crushed her in his strong arms until she could feel his heart beat fast and furiously. And every throb of his heart made her own heart beat faster. It was so wonderful, so amazing, that at last the way was clear to the second volume, by far the most important volume, of the life of Nancy Mary Yates. It was not going to be lived as she had planned, but it was going to be heaven—she knew it was.

"You told me you were going to marry a prince?" exclaimed the King, glowering at her, when she told him what he could easily have read in her flushed cheeks and in Rolf's Jensen's proud face. "Jensen hasn't anything but a salary—a small salary! You told me you had no use for a poor man!"

"That's what you said," corroborated the Duchess, who was glowering at Nancy, too. "That's exactly what you said! Prince Moneybags was what you called him!"

"I know," admitted Nancy, not at all apologetically, but very very triumphantly. "But I made a mistake. I thought I was looking for a prince,—

honest I did!—but I forgot all about him when I found a—country doctor!" She peeped at the country doctor from under long lashes and laughed happily. "Princes are going out of fashion. There isn't any demand for them any more. Girls want honest working men now. Money isn't as important as I thought it was. Nor as powerful! I've been watching it. Yes, I have! And I shall feel safer with a country doctor. He isn't an ordinary country doctor, you know. His grandfather was a king, the King of Little Denmark." She laughed and shamelessly squeezed the hand of the grandson of the former King of Little Denmark. "So I am going to marry a prince after all. I should say I am!"

"Humph," muttered the King, not at all pleased at the prince Nancy had chosen. "And there's that cereal factory which I started for you and Andy!"

"And the hand lotion factory which I started for you and Bert," grumbled the Duchess.

"You might give the hand lotion factory, minus my royalties, to Bert and Corice," suggested Nancy. "And Andy will soon find a girl to help him pop cōrn, won't you, Andy?"

"I shouldn't wonder!" Andy could not understand why he had failed to fall in love with this girl, whose eyes were like stars and whose cheeks were roses and whose lips were honey.

"As for Nancy Mary Yates," went on radiant Nancy, "she is going to marry the grandest man in the world—a country doctor!" She could scarcely believe it herself because she had always vowed that

she never would marry a country doctor, not if he were the very last man on earth.

"You said you never would marry a man who hadn't an incurable disease!" The King remembered suddenly. "Jensen's as sound as a nut. There is nothing the matter with him."

"You did say that!" Again the Duchess stood shoulder to shoulder with the King. "You said incurable. And Rolf Jensen is perfectly well. There is nothing the matter with him."

"Oh, I hope there is!" She was so serious that they looked at her in surprise. Even Rolf put his hand on her arm as if to ask why she hoped there was something the matter with him. "He is incurable! Aren't you? We are both incurable!" she told the Duchess and the King triumphantly.

"You look incurable!" snorted the King.

"Absolutely incurable!" sniffed the Duchess. "What's the matter with you?" And she looked suspiciously at Rolf.

"We're in love!" No wonder Nancy blushed when she told them what was the matter with her and with Rolf. She threw back her head when they sniffed and snorted and looked at them with such a joyful face that Rolf put his arm around her and kissed her right before their envious old eyes.

"Humph!" muttered the King, suddenly feeling very old and forlorn.

"Humph!" murmured the Duchess, and she turned her back so that she should not see their happy faces.

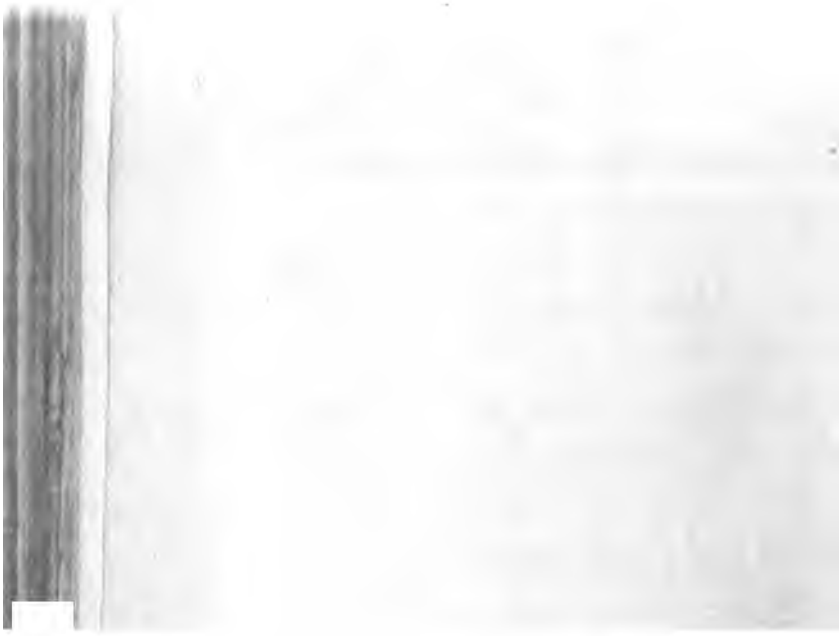
"There is one bright spot," the King exclaimed suddenly. "You and your Bert, Myrtice, are no better off than Andy and I. We have been thrown down together!" He seemed to take a lot of satisfaction in the thought that he had not been thrown down alone.

Nancy, as she stood with her hand tight in Rolf Jensen's hand, heard the word and her laughing face changed and became very solemn and very sweet.

"Together—what a whopping big word it is," she said slowly. "Uncle Ben did know! I wouldn't believe him! I had to learn for myself that there isn't a bigger word in the whole dictionary. It means you and me," she told Rolf Jensen with great content. "And you!" she nodded to the Duchess. "And you!" she recognized the King. "And young Andy and Bert and Corice and all the Lithuanians and all the Poles in Marathon, and all the people in Mifflin and Waloo! Why it means just everybody!" Her eyes widened with the new meaning she had discovered in the old word. "And when we all work together—My goodness gracious!—what can't we do! I am mighty glad it means me!"

"And me?" Rolf asked, bending down to look into her pink face.

The color deepened, and her dimples twinkled.

"You more than any one!" she told him honestly.

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